

J E A N N I C O L A S G R O U (1731 - 1803),
THE MAN AND HIS WORK

A Thesis prepared in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for
the Ph. D. degree
at the
University of Edinburgh
Scotland.

By

Reuben Clayton Pitts
229 Chesterfield Ave., C.H.
Petersburg, Va., U.S.A.



J E A N N I C O L A S G R O U (1731 - 1803),
THE MAN AND HIS WORK

A Thesis prepared in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for
the Ph. D. degree
at the
University of Edinburgh
Scotland.

By

Reuben Clayton Pitts
229 Chesterfield Ave., C.H.
Petersburg, Va., U.S.A.



PREFACE

In the preparation of this thesis, which is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Ph. D. degree at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, the writer has sought to gather all the material available. A trip was made to Paris and a visit was made to Lulworth in Dorsetshire, England in this effort. Contacts were made with the living editors of Grou's works. The Dom Roger Hudleston, who wrote introductions for recent issues of two of his books, proved to be very helpful.

We have covered all the material that we know to be available and have examined and analyzed it. The results are set forth in this work with the hope that they may prove helpful since this is the only work of this nature written on Jean Nicolas Grou.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Preface	
Table of Contents	
Introduction	
I. The Life and Era of Jean Nicolas Grou	1
II. Jean Nicolas Grou, the Man	26
III. Jean Nicolas Grou, the Writer and Scholar	65
IV. Jean Nicolas Grou, Priest and Spiritual Guide	110
V. The Theology of Jean Nicolas Grou	125
VI. The Asceticism of Jean Nicolas Grou	141
VII. The Mysticism of Jean Nicolas Grou	173
VIII. Grou's Exposition of Prayer	187
IX. Grou's Contribution	227
Bibliography	238

INTRODUCTION

At the first glance, it may seem that this work has a rather large number of divisions. However, the writer is convinced that they are all justified. It is natural to begin an investigation of any man and his work with a biographical sketch and a synopsis of the era in which he lived as a background for an examination of what he did. The second chapter was felt necessary because it is important to know something of the personal traits of a man to fully appreciate his work.

The primary part of the third chapter is devoted to an examination of Grou's writings themselves. An effort is made to set forth the pertinent facts about each book in a **brief** critical statement.

In his life time, Grou was known primarily as a priest and director of souls, and in his works he has set forth what he feels a confessor and director should be and do. The writer felt that this was of sufficient importance to demand treatment under a **separate** heading. This constitutes chapter four.

In chapter five an effort is made to find the principal elements of Grou's **theology** and thus to classify him as a spiritual writer.

Nicolas Grou was both an ascetic and a mystic. While in his books he does not separate them, both elements are clearly seen. It was felt that each of these elements demanded separate treatment and they are presented in chapters six and seven.

The most outstanding teaching in the works of Nicolas Grou is his doctrine of prayer. It was natural, then, that this should demand treatment in a separate Chapter. His exposition of prayer makes up chapter eight.

Chapter nine brings the study to a conclusion with a statement of the contribution made and a brief estimate. These nine divisions seem necessary to the writer for a thorough exposition of the subject.

CHAPTER I

THE LIFE AND ERA OF JEAN NICOLAS GROU

Jean Nicolas Grou was born on November 23, 1731 at Calais, France. The printed sources of information regarding his life are few. Synopses are given in several of the introductions to his published works, but all of these seem to have the same source for their facts. This is a privately published volume by A. A. Cadrès on Grou's life and works.¹ Beyond these and a few letters, which tell us little in addition, the outward incidents of his life seem never to have been recorded. These sources, however, while not adequate for a full biography, do furnish the pertinent facts in his life which are briefly presented here.

The life of J. Nicolas Grou falls naturally into four distinct divisions. The first, from his birth until he took his first vows as a Jesuit in 1748; the second, from his first vows until the experience he calls his "conversion" in 1767 or 1768; the third, from his "conversion" until his exile into England in the latter part of 1792; the fourth, the years spent at Lulworth in England ending with his death in 1803.

Of the first period of his life we find little recorded except the bare facts of the time and place of birth and his education. At a very early age he was sent to a Jesuit

1. A. A. Cadrès: Notice sur la Vie et les Ouvrages du Père Jean Nicolas Grou, Paris, 1862.

college, which one is not known, but Cadres thinks it was probably the S. Louis le Grand in Paris. As a whole the Jesuit colleges of France were the best at that time and the young Grou, doubtless, received a good foundation of classical training. He became acquainted with philosophy and science as well as spiritual writings and the lives of the great Christian saints. When he was only fifteen years of age, he was admitted to the noviciate of the Society of Jesus. In later life he often told of an incident that occurred during this time. He was given Rodriguez's treatise On Christian Perfection to study, and discovering that it contained some very interesting ^{incidents} /from the lives of the saints, he skipped much of the work because it was dry to him and read the stories which he enjoyed. When this behavior was reported, the Novice Master was unperturbed and said, "Let him alone, when he has read the stories, he will read the rest of it." When he had finished two years of his noviciate, he qualified and took his first vows into the Society. He was now seventeen years old.

As the second division of his life begins, Grou is employed as a teacher which was the custom of the Society. In 1751 he was at La Flèche in the Jesuit college teaching classics. During this time his taste for literature was greatly developed. He became deeply interested in Plato and Cicero, for he found in their writings, not only an excellent and pleasing style, but greater wealth

of thought and a purer code of morals than he discovered in the majority of the ancient writers. His interest and work in Greek philosophy bore fruit first in his translation of Plato's Republic into French. This was followed later by translations of both The Laws and the Dialogues of Plato. These translations were reprinted several times and were highly praised by the scholars of his day.

At that time Jesuitism in France was the object of several very bitter attacks. It was natural that Grou should become involved in these controversies. "The Jesuits were accused of laxness in their morals; of political meddling; of unscrupulously gaining too much power in the church and the state; of semi-Pelagianism in their theology; of becoming too much involved in vast commercial interests; of lax missionary methods; and of disobedience to the pope." 1 "Under these circumstances Jesuitism was called upon to struggle for its own life. -- The conflict grew desperate. Papal elections began to hinge on the question of the treatment of the Jesuits." 2

From within the Church they were opposed by the Jansenists and several other orders, who feared their power and disapproved their methods. From without the opposition arose from the leadership and philosophy of Voltaire and Rousseau and the many who followed them, reaching its climax "in the Encyclopedists, Diderot, D'Alembert and Baron

1. Frank M. Powell: Reasons for the Failure of the Jesuits, a lecture given at the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A., recorded in the author's notes, 1930.

2. Andrew C. Zenos: Compendium of Church History p.261

d'Holbach, (when) deism passed into materialism and atheism, relegating the ideas of God, of immortality, and of duty, into the world of superstitions that must be done away with." 1 At the height of the controversy, it seems that these two groups combined their powers in the effort to have the Jesuits banned in France. One of the most serious attacks was a book presenting dangerous statements which are said to have been made by the Jesuits and published in their books. 2 Grou contributed largely to the reply which was made under the direction of Père Sauvage as a defense against this volume. When in 1762 the Parliament of Paris suppressed the Society in France, the decree quoted an edict, supposedly issued by Henry IV in 1595, in which the Fathers of the Society were banished from his realms. Grou found, upon investigation, that the edict was a complete forgery and he wrote and published two letters to a member of Parliament in which he set forth proof of the forgery. 3

When Jesuitism was expelled from France, Grou and several of his brethren found refuge in Lorraine, under the protection of Duke Stanislaus, who welcomed the exiles to

1. Andrew C. Zenos: Compendium of Church History, Philadelphia, 1928. p.276
2. Extraits des assertions dangereuses...que les soi-disans Jésuites ont....publiees dans leurs livres, Paris 1762
3. Lettres à M----, Conseiller au Parlement de Paris, où on lui propose quelques doutes au sujet de l'édit de banissement des Jésuites, Porté par Henry IV en 1595, & rapporté en entier à la page 4 de l'arrêt du 6 août 1762. A Paris, 1763.

his domain. In the college at Pont-à-Mousson they were allowed to continue their teaching. Upon the death of Stanislaus in 1766, Lorraine was reunited to France and the decrees outlawing Jesuitism were put into effect there. Thus it became necessary for Grou to seek another haven. It was while he was living at Pont-à-Mousson that he took his final vows as a brother in the Society of Jesus, either in 1765 or 1766. He was thirty-five years old at this time.

On leaving Lorraine in 1766, Grou returned to Paris under an assumed name in spite of a decree which forbade any ex-Jesuit to live within six miles of the city. This was made possible through the aid of Monsieur de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, who assigned him to the chaplaincy of a convent of Benedictine nuns, employed him to write upon several religious subjects, and granted him a pension for some time. Because of the danger of this situation, Grou spent his time in complete retirement. He lived alone in a garret not far from the convent which he served and spent all his free time in writing. His stay in Paris at this time lasted until 1769 when he left for Holland.

It was during this stay of three years in Paris that Grou met Mère Pélagie of the Visitation Convent on the Rue de Bac. He was greatly impressed by this holy woman and by the unusual grace with which she seemed to be blessed. He listened with deep interest as she told him the way to a more perfect union with God by the full submission of the

human will to the Divine Will and the placing of one's self completely under the care of divine grace. Under her direction he made a Retreat and after that time he was resolved to give himself completely to God. This experience, which he referred to as his "conversion", marked the turning point in his life. It occurred in 1767 or 1768 and from then on his life was outstanding for its deep spirituality. Apparently he made Mère Pélagie his personal spiritual director and sought her advice from time to time for many years.

As we come to the third period in Grou's life, which began with his conversion, we find that he has left Paris and is now in Amsterdam. He had several of his translations of Plato published while there. The circumstances which made it necessary for him to flee Paris at this time are not known, but he remained in Holland for several years and did not return to Paris until 1776. It was while he was in Holland that he edited, in 1783, a new edition of Père Pierre Marie's The Science of the Crucifix In The Form^{Of} Meditations 1. It seems that after he returned to France, except for his clerical duties and his spiritual exercises, he spent all of his time writing on matters pertaining to the spiritual life.

The first of his spiritual works was published in Paris in 1786. This book, Morality Extracted from the

1. La Science du Crucifix, en Forme de Méditations; divisée en deux parties.

Confessions of St. Augustine, 1 met with such great and immediate success that Grou announced plans to follow it with others of a similar nature from the writings of St. Augustine. The outbreak of the French Revolution prevented the fulfilment of these plans. The second of his spiritual writings to be published was a small book called Characteristics of True Devotion. 2 This appeared in 1788 and proved to be very popular. The Jansenists in Paris launched an attack against it in their publication, Ecclesiastical News, declaring it was filled with a large number of great errors. This proved to be good advertising and the demand for the little volume increased. In the following year, 1789, his Spiritual Maxims With Explanations 3 was published.

It was not long after his return to Paris in 1776 when Grou received a request from Monsieur de Beaumont, the Archbishop of Paris, to collect materials for the composition of a Dogmatic Treatise of the True Religion. 4 He spent fourteen years gathering the materials for this work, which, it seems, might have been his most outstanding

1. J. Nicolas Grou: Morale tirée des Confessions de St. Augustine, Paris, 1786
2. J. Nicolas Grou: Caractères de la vraie dévotion, Paris, 1788.
3. J. Nicolas Grou: Maximes Spirituelles avec des Explications Paris, 1789
4. Traité Dogmatique de la vrai Religion

publication. The manuscript of this work, however, was destroyed before it was ever published. First, it was entrusted, without the author's consent, to the care of Abbé Bergier, who changed it, added to it and published it under his own name before returning it to the writer. When Grou left France in 1792 for England, he put it in the care of Madame d'Adhemar. A short time afterward this lady was arrested in the Reign of Terror and her servants burned the manuscript for fear it might compromise her. Grou received the message of its destruction calmly saying, "If God had wished to derive glory from that work, He would have preserved it. Since He has allowed it to perish, He can as well make use of another for His purpose as of me."

After editing "The Science of the Crucifix" by Père Marie, mentioned before, Grou planned a sequel of his own along the same line. About two years before he left Paris the plan came to fruition with the publication of The Practical Science of the Crucifix in the Use of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.¹ The years spent in Paris were very busy ones for Grou. He was much in demand as a preacher and the religious houses of the city kept him occupied much of the time giving conferences. Many of the addresses which he used on these occasions

1. J. Nicolas Grou: La Science pratique du Crucifix dans l'usage des sacrements de Pénitence et d'Eucharistie, Paris, 1789.

were written out, although he apparently did not intend to publish them. These manuscripts, the originals of which were lost, having been faithfully copied by Madame d'Adhemar, were put in print many years after the author's death under the title Manual for Interior Souls.¹ Today it is probably the most widely known of Grou's books.

By this time his books and his preaching had made for Grou a considerable reputation in Paris. His work as a priest and director of souls had caused many to reckon him as an outstanding spiritual force in that city, and he was receiving a pension from the king, Louis XVI. This happy and peaceful situation, however, was destined to be brought soon to an abrupt end by the outbreak of the Revolution in France and the coming of the Reign of Terror. Grou continued to live in Paris for a while in complete retirement and carried on his work as a priest in secrecy. This situation, however, was very dangerous at the time and friends, among them Mère Pélagie, who had already been forced to flee from her convent, tried to persuade him to leave France. In the summer of 1792 Mère Pélagie wrote to him begging him to seek refuge in England. He replied that he knew no one in England except the chaplain at Lulworth Castle, Father Alexander Mackenzie, who had published English translations of two of his books. The good lady

1. J. Nicolas Grou: Manuel des Ames intérieures, Recueil d'opuscules inédits du P. Grou de la Compagnie de Jésus (Édition complète) Paris, 1847.

wrote again pleading with him to go to Lulworth and about the same time he received an invitation to Lulworth from Father MacKenzie himself. Grou concluded that this was a direction from God and made the journey to England, arriving at Lulworth Castle as the year 1792 drew to a close.

As we come to the fourth and final division of Grou's life, we find him living with Father MacKenzie in the chaplain's house which was located near the castle at Lulworth. His host in England was Mr. Thomas Weld who became outstanding for his Catholic charity. Grou was not the only refugee among the clergy that found shelter through his generosity. Two other Jesuits, Fathers Thomas Stanley, Mrs. Weld's uncle, and Leonard Brook found haven with the Welds. The exiled Jesuits from Liege were given the mansion at Stonyhurst, Lancashire. A house at Winchester was provided for the English nuns of the Third Order of St. Francis. A farm and residence was placed at the disposal of exiled members of the Cistercian Abbey of La Trappe. Mr. Weld also supported for a time the Poor Clares of Gravelines and aided in the establishment of a convent of Cistercian nuns at Stapenhill, Dorsetshire.

When Père Grou had been at Lulworth only a short time, he was persuaded by Mr. Weld, who had seen in him unusual charm and sanctity, to come and live with the

family in the castle itself. The family was a rather large one composed of six daughters and nine sons besides Mr. Weld and his wife, Mary. Because the members of the household spoke French, Grou never learned English, consequently his ministry outside was limited. His influence upon the Weld family bore fruit in the fact that three of the sons entered the clergy and two daughters became nuns. Thomas, the oldest son, became a priest after his wife died; Edward and John became Jesuits, the former died in early manhood but the latter became Rector of Stonyhurst; Clare and Mary became Visitation nuns. In the cases of John and Mary, it is recorded that Grou predicted when they were children that they would enter fields of religious endeavor.

During most of his years at Lulworth, Grou lived in a very small room in the castle that was more a cell than a room, but this was all that he would accept. Here he put into practice, as far as possible, all the rules of the Society of Jesus. He got up regularly at four o'clock in the morning the year around, "and after saying his Office gave an hour to Mental Prayer. This was followed by preparation for and celebration of his Mass, which is said to have taken an hour; the Thanksgiving which followed it lasted as long. He also recited the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary every day." 1 His vow of poverty was so strictly

1. Roger Hudleston: Introduction, The School of Jesus Christ London, 1932

observed that he would not take any allowance and asked for books and clothing only when absolutely needed. As time passed, the solitude of his life became very precious to him and he lived more and more in seclusion. Nevertheless, when visitors sought him for consultations, he was always courteous and gracious to them and gave them as much of his time as they desired. All who came in contact with him, testified how they were impressed with his simplicity, his apparent inward joy and his great faith.

Grou spent nine intensely active years at Lulworth with many hours a day given to writing and praying. These years saw the production of manuscripts for several works which were not published during his life time, with the exception of Meditations in the Form of a Retreat on the Love of God,¹ which came out in London in 1796. Two of them, Treatise on Happiness,² and Treatise on the Peace of the Soul³ were lost in manuscript. The following were published: Maxims for the Conduct of Life,⁴ The Interior of Jesus and Mary,⁵ The Christian Sanctified by the Lord's Prayer,⁶ The School of Jesus Christ,⁷ Retreat on What a Christian Is,⁸ Retreat on the Gift of One's Self

1. Méditations en forme de Retraite sur l'Amour de Dieu
2. Traité du Bonheur
3. Traité de la Paix de l'ame
4. Maximes pour la conduite de la vie, adressées a un jeune Anglais catholique.
5. L'Intérieur de Jésus et de Marie
6. Le Chrétien sanctifié par l'Oraison Dominicale
7. L'École de Jésus Christ
8. Retraite sur de que c'est qu'un chrétien

to God,¹ and Retreat of the Knowledge and Love of Jesus Christ.² When he had passed seventy years of age, Grou's health had begun to fail. For many years he had suffered from asthma but he made no change in his rather rigorous life. It was about two years before his death that he suffered a stroke from which he only partially recovered. This was soon followed by dropsy and his legs became swollen to an enormous size. He could not lie down with comfort,^{and} as a result he spent the last months of his life largely in a chair.

During these last years he did very little writing but he continued to hear confessions and give individual conferences up to the very end. Toward the last he suffered very severely and his body became covered with loathsome sores. In his suffering he made no complaint except to express regret that the odor from his sores should be offensive to others. He had one last consolation before the end, the Society of Jesus was approved by the Pope, Pius VII, and given sanction in England. He was then able to renew his vows as a Jesuit and resume his title.

In the fall of 1803, recognizing that his time in this world was short, Grou gathered his manuscripts together and put them in the care of Father A. L. Simpson who later

1. Retraite sur le don de soi-même à Dieu

2. Retraite sur la connaissance et l'amour de Jésus Christ

turned them over to the School of St. Genevieve 1 in Paris. Having become very weak and expecting death at any time, he received the last sacraments from Father Brooke, now chaplain at Lulworth, on December 12, 1803. On the next day, December 13, 1803, he died quietly, holding a crucifix, with these words, "O my God, how sweet it is to die in thine arms." Below an inscribed slab in the church adjoining the castle at Lulworth his body still lies today.

CHAPTER II

JEAN NICOLAS GROU, THE MAN

Few men are greater than their work. It has been said, and it may be generally true, that genius will not often bear close inspection; that often the personal traits and characteristics of men mar their greatness. There are some men, however, whose work cannot be fully appreciated except in the light of their characters and private lives. What they were is so closely related to what they did that some knowledge of the former is necessary to a full understanding of the latter. A view of the real man and his character, instead of detracting from, becomes a supplement to his work. To this small group belongs Jean Nicolas Grou, scholar, preacher, Jesuit, priest, director of souls, mystic, ascetic and spiritual writer.

There is danger that a writer's enthusiasm, arising from his mounting interest as he becomes fully acquainted with the subject under examination, will cause him to exaggerate it beyond its proper place. This is the last thing that Nicolas Grou would desire; for he was, especially in the last half of his life, a noble example of humility. In fact, he would be unwilling to accept for himself any word of praise. He would say, on the other hand, that

any good that might be found in him was a gift from God and that all honor for it should be given to Him. "It is for me to believe myself incapable of anything, to mistrust myself perpetually, to undertake nothing on my own initiative; it is for me to hold myself ready beneath God's hand as a tool to use in any way he pleases, and to respond willingly to His every movement; it is for me to be yielding, docile, obedient, attentive, faithful; never to anticipate Him but always follow Him; to attribute to Him all the good I do; in short to live and die believing and acknowledging that I owe every spiritual benefit to God, even the good use that I may have made of His gifts." 1

Close proximity to Nicolas Grou enhances both the man and his work. This fact, and the fact that the picture of the man is somewhat obscure, justifies our setting forth here his personal characteristics as far as we are able to observe them.

He was an excellent student and made rapid progress in his education. The fact that it took him only two years, after becoming a novitiate to the Society of Jesus, to fulfil the requirements for taking his first vows testifies to his mental genius. A year or two later his work in the field of Greek Philosophy culminating in his translations

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 199

of Plato which attracted the attention of scholars of the time indicate that he was a man of keen intellect. Our observation of his very efficient use of reasoning and the processes of logic and his excellent memory which are so clearly seen in his works are further evidence of his mental ability.

It is significant that from his early youth Grou took a rather serious view of life. At a time when the average growing youth is flighty and unstable, we find that he was giving serious thought to spending his life in religious work, for he was only fifteen when he reached the decision to become a member of the Society of Jesus. This was, no doubt, partially the influence of the Jesuit School in which he had received his education. However, his later life indicates that this early maturity in his view and understanding was permanent with no record of any return to adolescence. From his early school days he was interested in books and became a voluminous reader. While he read in many fields, his keenest interest was in philosophy, theology, and biography.

Another interesting observation that ought to be made here is that Grou, the young Jesuit, was a man in which was found a fighting spirit. He came on the scene in those years prior to the suppression of the Jesuits in

France when the controversies regarding Jesuitism were raging. He fearlessly entered the fight, both by attacking opponents and by defending the Jesuits against them, as is evidenced by at least two writings¹ of his in this period. However, after the experience of "conversion", this fighting spirit seems to have subsided and he endured with submissive sweetness whatever "lot God might choose to place upon him."

The crisis or turning point in Grou's life came when he had already been a Jesuit for more than twenty years. As we have said before, he always referred to this crisis as his "conversion". There is no full account of this experience but he refers to it several times in his writings. We must not conclude that before this he had not been faithful to his vows; on the contrary, he had proven very worthy of his vocation and made for himself an excellent reputation in the field of religion. The outstanding fact is that from this point he was a changed man. His spiritual life was on a much higher level than it had been formerly. He gave up all reservations, whose presence in his heart he had not realized before, and surrendered himself completely and absolutely to God. The occasion of his great experience was a Retreat which he made on the advice of Mère Pélagie, a nun who apparently was favored with special graces from God. While on this Retreat, he was so

1. Lettres à M---, Paris, 1763, and Réponse au livre intitulé: "Extraits des assertions dangereuses et pernicieuses en tout genre."

filled with a "powerful infusion of divine grace" that he made the resolution which was the starting point of his new sanctity and his role as an influential director of souls and as a spiritual writer.

Years after its occurrence he wrote of his great crisis to Mary Weld and we give here his description of it. "Here is, so far as I am able to put it on record for you, an account of my spiritual state. I gave myself to God, twenty-four and a half years ago, under an impulse of grace so overpowering that I thought my soul would pass out of my body. From that moment I have possessed the gift of Prayer, with an habitual consciousness of the presence of God; and sensible consolations for a long time past.....I no longer have any free disposition either of my spirit or my affections, so that I cannot call to mind any subject or attach myself to any person with natural feeling.

"What I know of things spiritual I have never acquired by my own labour or by thinking it out; it is God who has given me such knowledge, and my prayer has always been a prayer of faith alone without any definite petitions. I speak and I write without the least idea what I am going to say. As you get to know me better you will see that I am frankness itself, that I am incapable of deceit or

subterfuge, but am perfectly sincere.

"All the same, I have plenty of failings, more than anyone I know; but these are not voluntary. I honestly believe that I am not attached to anything on this earth, and that I desire only to do God's will in all things." 1

From the time of this great experience he really lived for his religion. Someone has said "Men will write for religion, fight for it, die for it; anything but live for it." But this could not be said of the surrendered Grou. His conversion can be described in the words of Von Hügel. "The distinctive religious act is, as such, an unconditional surrender. Nowhere in life can we both give and keep at the same time; and least of all here, at life's deepest sources.....I will turn away then from all else (but God and His service) and will either directly fight, or at least will starve and stunt all other competing interests and activities." 2

This indicates that conversions, though differing infinitely in details, have this one thing in common when they are real and permanent. There is a complete giving up of self; self-seeking and personal interests which absorb the energies of so many people's lives are forgotten; the energies of the mind and heart are consecrated

1. Grou: A Manuscript directed to Mary Weld, in *Cadrés, Notice sur la Vie et les Ouvrages du Père Jean-Nicolas Grou*.
2. F. Von Hügel: The Mystical Element of Religion, Vol. I page 71.

to God alone. From the day of his resolution the course of Grou's life was different. He is no longer a fighter, a defender of the faith, apologetic writer and literary figure. His interest in these seems to have vanished entirely and he leaves them never to return again.

"Henceforth he lives a life essentially contemplative, giving up many hours a day to prayer, while his external activities are those of the Apostle of souls, hearing confessions, giving spiritual direction both orally and in writing, preaching Retreats and giving Conferences to Religious, which form the nucleus of those writings on spiritual life by means of which he is still a living influence in the (Roman Catholic) Church today." 1

Thus we see that it is the converted Grou, the man after the crisis, in whom we are primarily interested. The man who was essentially humble, who was straightforward and direct in his dealings with his fellowmen. The man whose demeanor was the essence of simplicity. The man who spent much time in prayer, not prayer filled with many petitions, but the prayer of the listening heart that waits for God to speak and act. The man who, in his relationships with others, was always courteous and gracious; who was absolutely fair and honest in all things. The man who sought above everything else to

1. Roger Hudleston: Introduction to Morality from St. Augustine.

know and do the will of God.

He refers to his conversion again in a letter to one of his spiritual children. "As regards my soul, since the conversion which God effected in me, it is child-like and simple in spirit; quite contrary to what I used to be before then, which barred for me the way to the things of God. The first grace which God gave me, when he made himself the Master of my being, was to infuse into my spirit and my heart a wholly child-like disposition. I did not understand God's way of guiding me at that time: but I left him to act and surrendered myself to the influence of His grace. At present I can see clearly up to a certain point, and I know that it would have been impossible for me to be steadfast amid all the different trials which divine Providence has sent me, if I had not first been brought to this child-like condition." 1

Many of those who are acquainted with his spiritual writings are impressed with a feeling that they are divinely inspired. Cadrés, who had seen all his manuscripts, says that they do not show signs of correction although they were composed rapidly, but seem rather "to have flowed from his pen without effort, like water from

1. Letter to Madame d'Adhémar, 1784

a jet." Grou himself wrote to Mary Weld, "I write nothing of myself upon matters spiritual, God guides my pen. When I take it up I do not know what I am going to write; and I am the first to be surprised at the thoughts which come to me." "I speak and I write without the least idea what I am going to say." 1 Before starting to write he would pray and if he was given anything to write he put it down easily and rapidly. Mary Weld records that he would sometimes say, "Pray for me! God is giving me nothing, I cannot find a word to write." As we have studied his writings, we have been impressed with the simplicity, directness and authority with which they seem to be written. One has the feeling that the writer has been told what to say and is merely recording a message that has been entrusted to him.

Another thing to notice about Grou in his later years was his growing love for solitude. He found his highest pleasure alone with God and his work. "Nothing is more opposed to my inclinations than intercourse with mankind, and no motive but the glory of God and the salvation of my neighbour makes me engage in it. I love solitude, silence, work. I would rather be alone, even with nothing to do, than take part in brilliant conversations in which I find nothing to interest me, any more than in other

1. Grou: Manuscript addressed to Mary Weld

things that belong to this lower world." 1 Again he says "It is not in dissipation, nor in the agitation and tumult of the world, that we shall hear it (the voice of God); but in solitude, in peace, in the silence of our passions and imaginations. The greatest step towards perfection which a soul can make, is to keep herself habitually in such a state that she can always hear the voice of God, when He speaks to her." 2 Thus he indicates that solitude, in his experience, is necessary for close fellowship with God.

In another reference, he speaks of solitude in connection with the love of God. "If we love solitude, silence, recollection and prayer; if we walk in the presence of God; if we purify more and more our motives; if we bear with evenness of soul the faults of our neighbour, and contrive that he may not suffer from ours; if the sight of our miseries humble us, without disheartening us, or even astonishing us: what else shall I say? If we wish to be virtuous not for ourselves, but for God's sake: if we forget our own interests to think only of His; if we strive to die to our own judgement, to our own will; we may believe that we love God, and that we are loved by Him." 3

1. Grou: Letter to Madame d'Adhémar
2. Grou: Manual for Interior Souls, translated from the French, London, 1896 p. 14
3. Grou: Morality from St. Augustine, London, 1934 p.303

He speaks of solitude again in reference to the necessity of cutting one's self off from the distractions of the world. "We must retire from the world as much as possible; we must break with all useless ties which have no other object than amusement; we must speak but little in company, and not always say what we wish to say; but when we are obliged to speak, we must do so plainly, and without human respect." 1 He believed that unnecessary fellowship with men was a hindrance to the practice of devotion. "Great freedom of speech is the sure mark of a frivolous and dissipated soul. I defy anyone to come away from a useless conversation, and to return easily to a state of recollection, or to pray or make a spiritual reading, with the peace and calm that are necessary for drawing any profit from such devout exercises." 2 "You think that you love God but you have no love for solitude, silence nor prayer. Your worldly affairs monopolize your thoughts and you are continually trying to increase the number of your friends and acquaintances. Solitude depresses and wearies you.....You have never studied the nature and effects of love." 3

In another passage he emphasizes that it is necessary for those who enjoy solitude to avoid as far as possible

1. Manual for Interior Souls, p. 111

2. Ibid p. 111

3. Grou: Meditations Upon The Love of God, translated from the French by Teresa Fitzgerald, London, 1898.

all disturbances, even to conversation with others. "You whom God has drawn to solitude that He may speak to your hearts and teach you the joys of prayer by filling you with His divine love, must be careful...to avoid disturbances. Guard carefully against useless conversation, curiosity about matters of the world, and engagement in unnecessary business."¹

He tells us that we may learn from Mary important lessons on how to regulate our external relationships with others, and no doubt these were observed with care by Grou himself. "First, not to seek society too eagerly, but to wait until God Himself leads us into it, interpreting as a manifestation of His will on this point the duties prescribed by courtesy and politeness... Secondly, as far as possible to seek our associates among the pious, from whom we may receive and to whom we may mutually impart edification... Thirdly, to guard against the dangers of dissipation, never recurring to the society of creatures as a pastime or a refuge against ourselves... Fourthly, not to prolong visits, even of charity, beyond a reasonable time."²

This solitude and detachment from others which was so precious to Grou was not exterior only. This silence

1. Meditations Upon The Love of God , selections
2. Grou: Interior of Jesus and Mary, translated from the French by Miss Kennelly, London, 1891. Vol. II p. 217

must be within the self. Useless thoughts and the indulging of the imagination must be controlled. "I know that we cannot help having these kinds of thoughts; but we can help letting our heart dwell on them, we can despise them, and take no notice of them.... The exercise of interior mortification is an efficacious means, and more than that, it is the only means by which we can attain that perfect silence of the soul which disposes us for close communion with God." 1 "It is also necessary to curb the imagination, and gradually accustom it to quietness... It is true that we are not wholly masters of that faculty.... But this is in our power: to refuse it those objects which it ardently desires, and to which it furiously clings.... Put aside all useless thoughts." 2

Nicolas Grou's love of solitude and his opposition to intercourse with men came not from his dislike of people but from his desire for continual and intimate fellowship with God. This is borne out by the fact that he was always willing to help anyone who came to him for advice, giving them all the time that was necessary. Those who knew him testified that he was always courteous, gracious, kind and sympathetic in his dealings with others. It is also borne out by the fact that he stressed love for mankind. "I ought to love God, I ought also to love all

1. Manual for Interior Souls, p. 112

2. Grou: Spiritual Maxims, translated from the French by Teresa Fitzgerald, London, 5th edition, 1910. p.38

the men who are made in the image and likeness of God. If I love the original my love must extend, proportionately, to the image which represents Him." 1 "Fill my whole being with Thy love for my brothers, who are also Thine. I desire to love them because Thou lovest them, so that I may deserve to be eternally loved of Thee." 2 "The love of our neighbour is a necessary consequence of the love of God; for we cannot truly love God without at the same time loving what he loved and what he commands us to love.... The interests of Christ are neglected when those of our neighbor are overlooked." 3 "Grace does not authorize the neglect of any duty to our neighbour, not even of the attentions prescribed by the forms of politeness; and to omit duties of this description under the pretext of devotion is totally to misapply, as well as to misunderstand, piety. How many conversions may be traced to interviews of this description commenced with no serious intention! How many souls have entered by this door into the way of perfection! St. Francis of Sales did more good by familiar conversation than by his sermons and controversial discourses." 4 These passages show that he was entirely willing and ready

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 68

2. Ibid p. 80

3. The Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. I 289, 297

4. Ibid, Vol. II, p. 198f

for association with others when such association might be the means of their salvation or their increased perfection in the practice of christian devotion. However, when they were unnecessary, he preferred solitude because in silent detachment from the world the soul can more easily fellowship with God and thus be more greatly benefited.

Another thing that is striking as we observe the character of Nicolas Grou was his practice of self-denial. This was seen outwardly, of course, in his practice of poverty which was common to all sincere Jesuits. He refused for himself all superfluous comforts and received only the necessities. He was convinced that an abundance of material things was always a handicap and stumbling block. He felt that those whose poverty was voluntary had a freedom that could not be enjoyed by those with great possessions, and thus they could find greater happiness in the service of and fellowship with God.

"We should love poverty and embrace its practice as far as can be done without affectation or singularity." 1
 "Still happier, in every sense of the word, than both these classes of people, are those whose poverty is voluntary, those who have followed the counsel of Jesus

1. The Interior of Jesus and Mary

Christ, and in order to follow Him with greater freedom have renounced all that they had, and taken a vow to possess no worldly goods. These have none of the cares involved in gaining or keeping money; the house that shelters them provides the necessaries of life; one or two persons are responsible for the needs of all. There is perfect equality among them in this respect, and since the question of mine and thine does not arise there is nothing to prevent them from being one in heart and soul like the early Christians of Jerusalem. They are entirely free to give their minds to spiritual things, and use their energies in the service of their neighbour's soul and body. If they be filled with the spirit as well as faithful to the letter of their calling they are angels on earth, and already have a share in the joy of the angels in heaven, for they think of God only, see God only, and work for God only. If the world thinks them unhappy it is because it does not know them, and because their type of happiness is not within its range." 1

In another place he speaks again of the value of poverty. "As to riches, the true Christian, taught by the Gospel, regards them as thorns and encumbrances which turn him away, in spite of himself, from more important

matters. If he is poor, he is glad of his poverty, pleased to feel its effects, and to want sometimes for necessary things; he would not allow in himself the least desire of greater competency. He feels it too great a privilege thus to bear some resemblance to his Lord, who chose a state of poverty wherein to be born, to live and to die." 1

According to Grou, the body is in a state of rebellion against the natural spirit of man, and the spirit of man is in a state of rebellion against God. These two disorders must be corrected and it is necessary that the rebelling body be subjected to the spirit, and the spirit must be submitted to God. Therefore, the body must be allowed no unnecessary indulgences. Our practice must be such as to keep it always under control. "It refuses all unnecessary indulgence to the senses; it allows food only to hunger, drink to thirst, sleep to fatigue, clothes and lodging to necessity; and suffers nothing to flatter the taste, or favor effeminacy. All excessive care of the body foments its rebellion against the spirit; and experience teaches us that it is always ready to make an evil use of unnecessary indulgence. A mortified Christian leads an ordinary life, in no way singular, but simple, sober and uniform, and strictly accordant to the rules of temperance and mortification. He looks on his body as a bad

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 94

servant who obeys grudgingly, and is always endeavoring to shake off the yoke. Therefore he keeps it in strict dependence, and so subjects it to the spirit, that it not only does not hinder, but assists the spirit's operations." 1

Nicolas Grou refused to seek the enjoyment of sensible pleasures. These he considered, not sinful in themselves, but rather as obstacles to the practice of true religion, especially when sought after. "Never go in search of pleasure for its own sake." 2 "God does not forbid us the enjoyment of any of the sensible things which He has created, since it is for us that He has created them, that is, for the use of our body, and of this present life. But He does not, and cannot allow us to attach ourselves to these things for our own sake." 3 "The holy severity of the Gospel is his (the Christian's) rule in the use of pleasures. He seeks out none for their own sakes, and passes through natural and necessary gratifications as through fire. In no respect will he indulge the flesh; he mortifies it ingeniously, granting no quarter to predilections, and conquering repugnances; but all with holy liberty, unaffectedly and discreetly." 4 "Jesus

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 127

2. Grou: Characteristics of True Devotion, edited by Samuel H. Frisbee, New York, 1894, p. 123

3. Morality From St. Augustine, p. 83

4. Spiritual Maxims p. 94

Christ appeared after Epicurus and Zeno, and commanded those who would be His disciples to renounce both the pleasures of the senses and the pride of intellect; to practise the most severe mortification and learn profound humility."1 "With the exception of the simple natural pleasure which the Creator has attached to certain actions, and the use of which is limited by the severest rules, He (Jesus Christ) has absolutely scorned every other kind of pleasure, especially those which men seek with the greatest eagerness, and as far as He Himself was concerned, He renounced even the most innocent pleasure. Hard work, apostolic labors, prayer and the instruction of His disciples and the multitude filled up every moment of His life." 2

While Grou practiced outward poverty and avoided sensible pleasure as far as possible, his practice of self-denial was not limited to exterior action. It was within the depths of his heart, in the realm of his interior dispositions that his most intense self-denial was practiced. Self-love and self-esteem he considered the root sin of all sin. He believed, then, that fellowship with God, the possession of the love of God and the experience of the gift of prayer require the annihilation

1. The School of Jesus Christ
2. Manual for Interior Souls, p. 94

of this root sin. Thus, he practiced himself and recommended to others interior self mortification. We shall give here some passages in which he sets forth this view.

"The love of God has an implacable enemy in you: that is, the love of self. These two loves are incompatible, therefore, if one is in control, the other is naturally excluded. You must fight against self-love if divine love is to make any progress in your heart." 1

"Thus, then, interior mortification is incomparably the most necessary, because it touches the root and source of the evil. And what is to be mortified in the soul? Everything, without exception. All is infected by the poison of sin: passions, mind, will, yea, the very depth of the soul. Such is the war of man against himself, of grace against nature; and in this war he must never lay down his arms, because the enemy is never wholly conquered." 2

"Everything within us is opposed to our supernatural good; everything draws us towards the slavery of the senses and of self-love. We must struggle continually against ourselves, and wage a constant war against our own inclinations, either in resisting impressions from without or fighting with those from within. We cannot

1. Meditations Upon the Love of God

2. Spiritual Maxims p. 129

watch too much over our own heart, and all that passes there. This is painful in the beginning; but it becomes easy as we grow accustomed to retiring into ourselves and keeping ourselves in the presence of God." 1

"It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that he should renounce himself, unless he desires to renounce God, his origin and goal, and to renounce, too, his glorious destiny, his happiness in the present life, and his nature as a rational being." 2

"She (the soul) also declares war against nature, against her own mind and heart, against her natural character and disposition; and in order that she may not be carried away by imagination or an indiscreet zeal, she begs of God that He will Himself direct her in this war, that He will enlighten her as to the enemies against whom she ought to fight, that He will pass over nothing, but will warn her of all that goes on within her, that she may regulate all by the help of His grace. She forms the generous resolution of restraining herself in everything, and of allowing nothing in herself which could wound the infinite sanctity of God." 3

"The will must die to its own likes and dislikes, must resist its inclinations and do violence to its aversions. It must study to cross itself in all things,

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 17
2. The School of Jesus Christ p. 85
3. Manual for Interior Souls p. 28

and to quench its own desires. It must be willing to see hope disappointed, schemes brought to nought, purposes neglected or resisted. It must have no self-interest, and must learn never to consider self. It must enjoy divine consolations without become dependent on them: it must bear their removal without repining." 1

"If you do not hate and wage war against everything vicious that exists in your nature, you cannot answer for yourself; you cannot tell what trap you will be thrown into through your self-indulgence on one point. You cut off the branches of a certain vice, but you leave the roots alive: the plant will spring up again and bear new branches and at last you will grow tired of cutting them, and they will be your ruin. It is of no use to hold your hand if you do not arrest the desire; sooner or later your desire will force your hand. It is the first idea, the first impulse that you must check the moment that you perceive it, the moment that God calls your attention to it. If you leave the idea in your mind you will come to like it, and soon the action will follow; the repeated action will create a habit, and one fault will bring a greater one in its train." 2

"What does God ask of us, when He commands us to annihilate ourselves and to renounce ourselves? He asks

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 134

2. The School of Jesus Christ p. 86

of us to do ourselves justice, to put ourselves in our proper place and to acknowledge ourselves for what we really are. Even if we had been born and had always lived in a state of innocence, even if we had never lost original grace, we should still be nothing else but utter nothingness from our very nature; we could not look upon ourselves otherwise without making a great mistake." 1

This interior self-denial, this mortification of self, this renunciation of the will, and all within the nature that rebels against God can be accomplished only by the work of God himself as one gives himself completely to Him. Self-interest and self-love must be crushed and the self given into the hands of God. So self-denial, in the final analysis, can be accomplished only as the self is fully and unreservedly surrendered to God. Grou expressed his conviction of this in many passages in his works. "Of all the matters of the Christian life, this (the gift of one's self to God) is without exception the most important; it is the foundation of the whole structure; the beginning, and in fact the only path for a true disciple of Jesus Christ. To give one's self to God is so to consecrate to Him every thought, every affection, every action, that the mind may be occupied with Him only and with the objects

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 187

which He at each moment presents to the mind; that the heart may love Him only, and creatures in their relation to Him according to the order which He has Himself established; that everything we do and everything we suffer may be for Him, and that His glory and His good pleasure be our final aim and our first intention." 1

"All you can give Him through your free consent, He will surely incline you to give; and what will not be in your power to give, He will incline you to let Him take, in virtue of the absolute offering you have already made of yourself." 2

"Self-renunciation, in the sense that our Lord understands it, is so to place ourselves in the hands of God that, sinful and imperfect as we are, He may make us holy and perfect; to give up to Him all our faculties that He may purify them; no longer to guide ourselves, that He, guiding us Himself, may raise us to a holiness worthy of Himself." 3

"All it (the soul) has to do is to lay itself in His hands, to use its activity only in order to become more dependent on Him; to let grace act freely in all circumstances, and to its full extent, the soul reserving no

1. Grou: Self Consecration or (The Gift of One's Self to God), translated from the French, New York, 1887., p. 19,21
2. Characteristics of True Devotion, p. 127
3. Self Consecration, p. 50

power to itself except in order to thorough correspondence with grace." 1

"God, who alone can place within us His holy love, and who alone can give it increase, surely is ready to give us every grace necessary for the preservation and growth of this treasure of love; but this grace, without which we can do nothing, He only gives in proportion as we give ourselves to Him." 2

"But though I find no assurance in myself, I find a full and entire one in God. I know that if I confide in Him, I remain unshaken; I know that on His part, no succor, no kind of protection will be refused me: that if I make over to Him the concerns of my soul, He will watch over them as His own property." 3

"Who then are those that possess this perfect rest? They who have given themselves totally to God; who have made over to Him the care of all their interests and concerns; who let themselves be guided by His providence, and study faithfully to follow the motions of grace. Such Christians as these, whether in the world or separated from it, are above the world and all its vicissitudes; they are settled in a region which the evils here below cannot reach." 4

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 15
2. Self Consecration, p. 43
3. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 317
4. Ibid, p. 4



From these citations it is evident that when we look at the character of Nicolas Grou, we see a man in whom self-denial was continually practiced by the giving of himself into the care of God and by co-operating with all his own powers to that end.

Closely related to his belief in and practice of self-denial was Grou's attitude toward suffering. As a young Jesuit he had fought intensely to avoid bitter trials and hardships and rebelled against the suffering that he was forced to endure. But the devout man who had given himself to God was entirely different. He accepted the trials and sufferings that were his lot without a murmur. He believed a loving God allowed trials as a means of sanctification and as a means of bringing glory to God. Therefore a christian should find in his sufferings and crosses joy rather than repugnance.

When he speaks of sufferings, crosses and trials which come in the christian life, Grou is not thinking about the limitations and restraints prescribed by the ordinary duties of religion and the observance of the moral law. But he means "certain dispensations of Providence, either natural or supernatural, which thwart us, humiliate us, give us pain or sorrow, and try us in a variety of ways. Such crosses may be caused by nature,

like bodily afflictions, infirmities and illnesses; or by condition in life like poverty, toil and dependence; or by some state that we have adopted, such as marriage; or by man's injustice, or by fortuitous accidents, or the malice of evil spirits. Or they may come to us directly from the hand of God. They attack our health, our possessions, our peace of mind, our reputation, our person or persons of those whom we love; they mortify our feelings, our pride, our self-love; they exact a variety of sacrifices from us, some outward and some inward." 1 In his Manual for Interior Souls, Grou names five kinds of crosses but the first three are connected with the regular duties of religion as indicated in the chapter entitled Our Lord's Yoke Is Sweet in his School of Jesus Christ. The sufferings or crosses, then, are of two kinds, those that are inevitable from the hand of Providence and fall on sinners and christians alike and those which are sent as spiritual crosses to christians to try and to prove them.

"The crosses from the hand of Providence, which are the fourth kind, are inevitable. The wicked are not less exposed to these than the good. But by their resignation, their patience, and submission to the will of God good Christians sweeten all that is bitter in these inevitable

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 180

crosses; and their religion furnishes them with motives for bearing them in peace and even joyfully. It is not so with those who are in rebellion against God, who give way to sadness, depression, and despair, and who make their crosses infinitely heavier by the bad disposition with which they receive them." 1

Everyone has his own crosses of this kind; for some they are numerous and great; for others they are few and small. Striving to avoid them will not meet with success. Complaints and rebellion, instead of bringing relief, aggravate our troubles. Grou says that Christ demands that we bear them with willing humility.

"He requires that we should take our cross from the hand of God, place it upon our own shoulders, and bear it with a willing heart and entire submission to His will. It is as though He were to say: Do not be stubborn, do not resist the absolute order of your Sovereign Master; you will gain no relief by it; on the contrary your soul will lose much in every way. Accept all that His wisdom, justice, and mercy have ordered for you; yield to it with good grace; and if you be not perfect enough to accept all the trials He sends you with love and gratitude, at least bear them with resignation and make temporal evils work your eternal happiness. By behaving thus you will infalli-

bly make your cross lighter; it will be accounted meritorious to you; you will induce God to give you supernatural strength to carry it; and you will end, not only by enduring it without repugnance, but by finding it a matter of joy and consolation." 1

Again, Grou tells us that suffering is a necessity for growth in holiness. "You may ask me: Why must we bear so many internal and external trials? Can we acquire holiness at no less price? No; the Gospel affirms that holiness is only to be attained by suffering, or at least by the will to suffer. Holiness consists in readiness to embrace all the crosses that it may please God to send us. God does not bid us to forestal crosses, but it is His will that we should stand firm to receive them, and that when they are laid upon us we should accept them bravely. He who shrinks away will never be holy." 2 The Christian undergoing suffering is compared by Grou to a sick person who takes unpleasant medicines and treatment gladly because it is for the benefit of his body. "A sick person willingly swallows nauseous medicine although he dislikes its bitterness; and freely submits to a painful operation even while loudly manifesting his sense of its tortures. This is precisely the disposition in which God

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 181

2. Spiritual Maxims p. 151

requires us to bear the trials he sends. Let the soul see in them the will of God; let her look on them as a portion of the cross of Christ, which it has fallen to her lot to carry as a pledge of his love for her and an efficacious means of testifying her love for him; in fine, as the most certain means of promoting her spiritual advantage." 1

The second kind of sufferings or trials are "Those spiritual crosses which come only from God, to prove and try those who love Him and which, as I have said before, are crosses of pure love, these are the delight of the favoured souls who bear them. They accept these crosses of their own free-will and choice; far from asking to be delivered, they beg of God incessantly to add to them, crying out with a great Saint: 'Yet more, Lord; yet more': they wish to die fastened to the cross, like their Lord and Saviour." 2 Here he indicates that many desire crosses, but in another passage he indicates that this is not required. "You are not required to desire crosses, or seek them out, or ask God to send them to you; it is not necessary that you should protest to Him like S. Teresa that life without them is insupportable, nor that you should, like S. John of the Cross, wish for no other reward for your labours in the cause of God's glory than to

1. The Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol.I p. 111
2. Manual for Interior Souls p. 37

suffer and be despised for His sake. Such feelings as these are experienced only by the very few, and are the result, either of a very high degree of acquired perfection, or of a special inspiration." 1 "Never seek the cross, which will surely come uninvoked." 2

In The Interior of Jesus and Mary Grou points out that while the outward sufferings borne by Jesus Christ were painful and bitter, His intense suffering was interior as He annihilated Himself for the glory of God and the salvation of man. This interior suffering reached its fullness when the Father turned his back on His Son. "Although Jesus abandoned Himself unreservedly to His Father in death, His sacrifice would not have been complete unless He had also been apparently abandoned by Him; ... The greatest of the sufferings of Christ beyond comparison, was His dereliction by His Father. Suffering souls, who are required to sacrifice your dearest interests by the God who loves you as Jesus loved Mary, there would be a deficiency in your holocaust unless the Almighty apparently rejected you. That the trial is indispensable precisely because it is the most severe of all others." 3 Many times perplexity, darkness and terror will arise in the heart of a devout christian walking the interior way.

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 181
2. The Interior of Jesus and Mary
3. Ibid, Vol. II p. 311f

Desolation, doubt and inward pain will settle in the heart and a feeling that the soul is deserted by God arises. This interior cross should be accepted and borne gladly. At this point the exercise of "bare faith" is called for. "This bare faith glorifies God most, because He is hereby served in a manner worthy of Himself, which yields no pleasure to self-love, and wherein we in no wise seek ourselves, but practice self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice, and give ourselves over to bear all such rigour as it shall please a merciful justice to exercise upon us." 1 The bearing of interior crosses which are sent by God is a matter of free choice. While the soul should not seek them, she should be so submitted to God that a willingness to bear whatever He sends should always be present.

The constant happiness that seemed to flow continuously from the heart of Nicolas Grou, he attributed largely to the practice of self-denial and the attitude toward suffering which we have discussed above. These result, not only, in giving glory to God, in the salvation of the soul, in an advance in holiness but in the gaining of real happiness. To the man who has the Christian philosophy of suffering, "God no longer appears as a master, a judge or an avenger, but as the best of fathers, the tenderest of

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 149

spouses, the most intimate of friends. He suffers, but is glad to suffer; and, far from wishing relief, desires to suffer still more." 1

"The truth I now propose to develop is experimentally known but to interior souls, and even to these it is disclosed only when they have made some progress in the spiritual life, for it is one of those truths which the heart must feel before the understanding can comprehend it. Christians in general assent to it as a point of faith, but they do not understand, because they have never experienced it nor ever aimed at those dispositions which would render them worthy to do so. ... We know, on the testimony of faith, that Jesus Christ was the happiest and, at the same time, the most suffering of men, this apparent contradiction was in Him perfectly reconcilable. ... Thus His soul was divided between two sensations, one sweet and blissful; the other bitter and crucifying; both were based on love, and so perfectly counter-balanced one another that each equally tended to his happiness, and never did he desire that the predominating influence of the first should weaken the agonizing impression of the second. ... When the soul is so satisfied to suffer that she would not diminish the severity or curtail the duration of her pains, but would consent to support them for a whole

1. Self-Consecration, p. 92, 94

eternity if such were God's pleasure. Under these circumstances it is literally true that happiness and anguish exercise an equal dominion over her and that Divine love is the source of the contending sensations: she suffers because she loves, and in proportion as she loves and considers herself so privileged in being allowed to suffer that for no earthly consideration would she exchange her lot." 1

It is the natural desire of all men to be happy. Grou describes the state of happiness in the following citation. "I call a man happy, to the extent possible in this life, if he be in a condition that he likes and is contented with, and would not change for any other, nor allow himself to wish ended or improved. Now this has always been the condition of the martyrs, and of all who have confessed Jesus Christ, and of all His true disciples who have suffered for justice' sake. This state of mind is certainly not the outcome of human virtue; it has a higher origin. It is the effect of grace, which inspires, supports, consoles, and raises the soul above natural things, and shows it the heavens opening. How it is accomplished is God's secret. He has promised those who suffer for His sake that they shall possess their souls in patience. He fulfils His promise, and all who have experi-

1. The Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. I p. 298 f, 301 f.

enced these trials bear witness to the faithfulness of His word." 1

He attests again his conviction that happiness in this world, as well as eternal happiness, comes by way of suffering. "It is, then, true, unmistakably true, that even the present and temporal happiness of the Christian consists solely in the cross; and that, on the contrary, those who fly from the cross, and seek only what will content nature, find neither happiness nor peace, but only disappointment in this life, and eternal misery in the next." 2

Grou's attitude toward death is impressive. "The thought of death is sweet and consoling to those interior souls who have given themselves to God in good faith, and who, occupied solely in loving and serving Him, have placed their fate in His hands." 3 "The manner in which we look upon death depends upon the disposition of our hearts. When the heart is purified from the poison of self-love, when the assiduous exercise of prayer and interior mortification has broken down all the barriers between the soul and God, when we have passed through trials which have led us by degrees to the greatest sacrifices, and when we have attained to a state of perfect

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 121
2. Manual for Interior Souls p. 38
3. Ibid p. 245

union with God, it is impossible for us to fear death; we no longer look at it as it regards ourselves, but only as it regards the will of God; and in this holy will death loses all its terrors: it is only amiable and desirable for those whose will is absorbed in the will of God." 1 In his last days as death drew near Father Brooke tells us that "He thought continually of death and made ready for it by his patience; speaking only of God and maintaining his serenity of outlook unchanged." He thought of life on earth as a time of preparation for eternity with God and therefore, like the apostle Paul, looked forward to release of his soul from the bonds of the flesh into her better life, for which she had been destined by God.

We have seen in the person of the man, Nicolas Grou, a devout Christian who walked the Interior Way. He tried in all that he did to carry out the example of Jesus Christ. He was a man given to God without reservation and in whom the practice of self-denial was continuous. He realized his utter nothingness without God and resigned everything to complete obedience to Him. He accepted suffering willingly as a means of grace and a gift of God. The enduring of pains and trials was to him a means of the happiness which flowed from the depths of his heart.

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 245

His major concern in life, next to bringing glory to God, was the spiritual welfare of his fellowman. He walked in the presence of God in the highest sense. "There is a presence of God which consists of an habitual infused peace. This presence first makes itself known by its sweetness, which as S. Paul bears witness, passeth all understanding. Afterwards, it is only perceived, without being strongly felt, and at last, it is enjoyed, like health, without being noticed." 1 "The Rev. Mr. Brooke (then Mr. Weld's chaplain) used to bring him the Blessed Sacrament, and spend much time with him; but he was accustomed to say that Père Grou lived too wholly with God to need any human companionship." 2 His life was characterized by humility, serenity and simplicity. He himself considered "that the greatest grace God had ever given him was a child-like and simple spirit, the lack of which, as he thought, had previously closed his eyes to the deep things of God." 3

Before us now emerges the portrait of a man who stands high above his fellows in a spiritual sense; a man whose life was so much like that of his Master that mankind may lift their eyes to the mountain top where he stands and see the light of the eternal God in his face. When he speaks it is the voice of experience we hear.

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 35

2. H. L. Sidney Lear: Preface to The Hidden Life of the Soul, London, 1927

3. Ibid

His message is delivered with an authority derived from a close fellowship with God. Such was the man, Jean Nicolas Grou, who ranks high among those men who are "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world."

CHAPTER III

JEAN NICOLAS GROU, THE WRITER AND SCHOLAR

It is as a writer on the spiritual life that Nicolas Grou will live. He stands at the top among the Catholic writers of the era in which he lived. This fact was not realized by his contemporaries for two reasons. In the first place, he spent a large part of his life in hiding or in exile. In the second place, some of his best work was left in manuscript form and was not published until after his death. The intense activity of the nineteenth century that developed with the great Industrial Revolution and the consequent emphasis on material things resulted in a trend away from meditation, the practice of the presence of God and deep spiritual life. Several of his works which were published before he was forced into exile were well received. Of those written while in England only one ¹ was published before his death. Part of a second ² was published in English. Much of his best writing did not appear until many years after his death. While many published later have run through several editions, interest in Grou's writings seemed to be on the wane in the bustling years that marked the early twentieth century. One hundred and fifteen years after his death,

1. Méditations en forme de Retraite sur l'Amour de Dieu,
1796 London
2. The School of Jesus, Dublin, 1801

Nicolas Grou was scarcely known except by a few Catholic scholars.

However, in the period which followed World War I, there was a revival of interest in his spiritual works. The majority of them have been republished and translations into other languages have been made.

It is not unusual that interest in a man's works will wane after a hundred years almost to the vanishing point. In fact, in such a length of time the majority are forgotten. A new day brings new writers with a message more suited to the times. But when a man has been dead more than a hundred years and there is an awakening interest in his work, we may well ask why. In the case of Grou the answer will be found in his writings themselves. They were addressed to the needs of individuals and groups of his time, but their message is timeless. Those who read his works today find that the truths presented are as applicable in our day as they were in his. Like the New Testament, in which most of the books are addressed either to an individual or a group at a specific time for a specific purpose, the principles laid down and the advice given is suitable to all people of every era.

Before we proceed to a study of Grou's spiritual

works, which will occupy a large part of this chapter it is fitting that we pause here to pay tribute to his great scholarship. His first literary work was in the field of Greek philosophy. He translated into his native French the Republic of Plato 1 and followed it later with translations of the Laws of Plato 2 and the Dialogues of Plato. 3 These were well received and met with the approval of scholars of the time. In them Grou showed a thorough knowledge of the Greek language and a good understanding of Plato. His fondness for Plato continued throughout his life. He says of him later, "All truth proceeds from God, who is the eternal and infinite truth that formally includes all that is, and all that can be. God is also the master that teaches all truth, being the light that discovers it to the eyes of the soul. ... Plato had some knowledge of this whether he had discovered it of himself, or borrowed it elsewhere, when he said in his Republic, that the sun was with respect to the visible bodies, what God was with respect to intelligible objects; nor do I believe that we can meet with anything so sublime in any other profane philosopher. It seems that reason cannot lift itself to

1. La Republique de Platon, Paris, 1762
2. Loix de Platon, Amsterdam, 1769
3. Dialogues de Platon, Amsterdam, 1770

a higher pitch; if even it has lifted itself so high of itself." 1

In another passage when he is discussing the folly of attempting to find God through reason alone Grou shows that he is familiar with many of the other ancient philosophers. "The same has happened in every age. The pride of the mind, and curiosity which is a shoot of it, have produced all the errors in matters of religion. ..."2 "Nevertheless because these philosophers did not seek God 'with Piety', some of them have strayed into absurd and impious systems, in which the Creator of the universe, the light that enlightens every mind, the author, the protector, and guardian of society had no share. Who could justify or excuse on this head Pythagoras and his disciples, Plato, Xenophon, the whole Socratical school and Socrates himself?

"The source of the evil is that those lovers of wisdom, whether sincere or simulated, by not seeking God as they ought, did not deserve that God should unveil Himself to them, or that He should bestow on them the necessary graces, to enable them to confess Him publicly, and glorify Him in the face of idolatry. But what is it to seek God as he ought to be sought? It is to seek Him with a true desire of knowing Him, with uprightness of

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 156f

2. Ibid, p. 147

heart, with an humble diffidence of our own understanding, with a resolution of paying the worship that his nature demands, and of obeying His laws." 1 Here Grou is saying that the human reason unaided by divine light from the Holy Spirit cannot apprehend the great truths of God, the universe and life; that only those who are given to God are given that divine light. We shall have more to say on this subject in a later chapter.

Grou makes mention of the ancient philosophers many times in his works. He refers specifically to the teachings of Epicurus, Zeno and Cicero. He was also familiar with the early Christian philosophers and took them to task for the folly of their haughtiness of mind. Referring to the efforts to combine Platonism and Christian teaching he said, "As they found in it some analogy to what is met with in Plato: a doctrine which he had probably borrowed from the school of Pythagoras who had learnt it in Babylon, either from some Jews or from the sages, some short time after their return from captivity: they admired and willingly adopted the first verses of the gospel of St. John, as a beautiful and sublime speculation, which flattered the pride of their reason; for these Platonics were the proudest of philosophers; but from a haughtiness of mind,

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 150f

they rejected what the apostle adds, of the Word's being invested with our flesh, and conversing with men." 1

He is no doubt thinking particularly of the Arian group of philosophers or theologians whose Platonism is evident. He refers to Arianism by name in another place. "Are they unaware that, ever since the birth of Ariansim, when so many bishops renounced their belief in the Trinity and so cruelly persecuted - both in the East and the West-- S. Athanasius and the other defenders of the Divinity of the Word, there has never been a century when the episcopal body has not produced instances of great virtues and great vices side by side, great causes of edification and causes of scandal?" 2

Grou's scholarship is seen again in his familiarity with Protestant as well as Catholic theology. In one passage he indicates that he believes the Protestant teaching places the responsibility for human behavior on God. The desire to remove this responsibility from themselves has caused many to follow their erroneous doctrines. "Is not this the motive that has engaged so many people, and yet retains them in the errors of Luther and Calvin? Is it not in reality very pleasing to the human pride, to be able to say to one's self, If I have sinned, God is

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 184f
2. The School of Jesus Christ p. 456

the cause of it by refusing me His grace; if I had had it, I should not have yielded, nay, could not have yielded; that we had not even the grace of prayer to obtain necessary helps, since we did not pray; in a word, that we have been wanting to God, only because He was first wanting to us? If pride be gratified by this system, libertinism, and in general all the passions are equally so. This doctrine gives them scope, and absolutely restrains them in nothing." 1

We have already mentioned the fact that he was familiar with Voltaire, Rousseau, the Deists and the Atheists. He says that Voltaire is not really a philosopher because he has no "profundity of thought" and that his work is very "superficial". Rousseau, he says, "is hardly much more." According to Grou, all of these are linked together having started from the same error, rebellion against the teaching and authority of the Catholic Church. He traces them back to the Reformation and makes their teachings the final outcome of the doctrines of Luther, Calvin and the Protestants. "If you wish to be still further convinced of the need of a teaching Church for the preservation of the Faith (the Catholic Church and Doctrine) as it was delivered, you have only to observe how inevitably, if insensibly, a

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 162

revolt against the Church leads to the absolute loss of that Faith. Luther produced Calvin, who on many points carried error further than he. The Socinians only extended to all the Mysteries the principle on which Calvin based his denial of the Real Presence - so forcibly and clearly affirmed in the scriptures. The Deists, more logical than the Socinians, refused to admit the divine inspiration of books whose utterances must be distorted by the most unnatural interpretations to avoid, as the Socinians maintain, meeting in every line with absurdities directly opposed to reason; and they rejected all revelation as the invention of man. The Atheists, starting from the same principle as the Deists, - that to believe, a man must understand, - denied the existence of God because everything in His nature and attributes was incomprehensible to the human mind." 1

Nicolas Grou was, no doubt, acquainted with the teachings of Descartes (1596-1650), Spinoza (1632-1677), Leibnitz (1646-1716), and probably Wolf (1679-1754), Berkeley (1684-1753) and Kant (1724-1804), who were contemporaries. He knew well the doctrines of Rationalism and Deism so may have been familiar with the teachings of Herbert (1581-1648), Hobbes (1588-1679), Toland (1669-1772), Bentley, Boltingbroke and Hume (1711-1776), as

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 454

well as those philosophers of his own country which we have mentioned. He recognized the dangers in the doctrines that were taught and, doubtless, in his sermons in Paris before his exile, he exposed them. In the following passage he makes a plea against them. "In these days false Philosophy is threatening Europe with still greater ravages; and this is because the countries concerned did not sufficiently fear it at first, while it was still weak, nor arm themselves against its hollow sophistries by steadily adhering to the principles of the Gospel. It is because the temporal powers, being concerned about nothing but their authority, thought that force would suffice, and that religion was not necessary for keeping nations submissive, that false philosophy is now in a position to shake all the thrones of Europe, to invade every kingdom triumphantly, and everywhere overturn the rule of Jesus Christ. If the schemes projected long ago, put forward in so many writings, planned with so much skill, undertaken with so much audacity, directed with so much consistency, and already carried out in the most flourishing kingdom of Europe are ever to be upset and shattered, it can only be because the pure goodness of the Almighty will lead Him to attend personally to the furtherance of His glory, and the eternal - and even temporal - happiness

of His creatures.

"As for the country in whose heart the storm arose, those who were appointed to maintain religion and the authority of the government should deeply reproach themselves for their ineffectual defence of them both, and for having contributed to their ruin, at least by negligence. At the same time the Christian men and women distinguished by birth, rank, education and knowledge are much to be blamed for uniting with the people in accepting the miserable philosophy that is now crushing them. If their eternal interests leave them unmoved, their temporal interests, at all events, will prompt them for the future to avoid these false prophets, these teachers of lies and iniquity, who assiduously courted and flattered them and grovelled to them for support, and depended on them for the success of the very writings that aimed at their ruin."¹

That Nicolas Grou was a scholar with a wide range of knowledge is attested by his acquaintance with the history of Christianity, the lives and works of the early church fathers and the Saints, and his grasp of history in general. He uses the Confessions of St. Augustine as the foundation for one of his works and quotes from him often in some of his others. He quotes from Thomas a Kempis, especially The Imitation of Christ, a book of devotion which

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 404

he recommends very highly for spiritual reading. He naturally would refer to and quote from the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola since this is the main work of the founder of the Jesuit Society to which he belonged. When recommending books for spiritual reading he said, "Rodriguez (whose most prominent work is On Christian Perfection) is excellent for beginners. For those who are more advanced, the Imitation of Christ, the writings of Father Surin, Saint Francis de Sales, the Psalms and the New Testament, the Lives of the Saints, etc."¹

When he was discussing the fact that those who walk the interior way after the example of Jesus Christ may too be treated like him by critics, he refers to several of the saints. "However careful, then you may be to distinguish in these difficult matters between the true and the false, the safe and the dangerous, the solid and the illusory, the inspiration of grace and the prompting of nature or the devil, your words will be distorted; and either from ignorance or malice you will be taxed with saying what you did not say, or even with saying the exact opposite of what you said. It will be in vain that you plead the authority of the books most commonly accepted, such as the Imitation of Christ, a more pro-

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 16

foundly spiritual work than is supposed, - or the works of such writers as S. Catherine of Genoa, S. Francis de Sales, S. Teresa, or S. John of the Cross; in vain that you should show your teaching is based on the actual words of Jesus Christ and His Apostles, and apply them in the most natural and literal sense; in vain that you seek support from the experience of the Saints, and all that is known on impeachable evidence of their methods of prayer, their temptations and the tests that they endured." 1

Among other Saints of the Church that Grou discusses or from whom he quotes, the outstanding are S. Catherine of Sienna, S. Bernard of Clairvaux, S. Basil, S. Chrysostom and S. Arsenius. It will be noted that all of these who have been named were either ascetic or mystic or both ascetic and mystic in their teachings.

This short review of Grou's wide acquaintance with the classics, with both ancient philosophy and that of his own day, with history and particularly the history of the church, with christian philosophy and theology from early times to his own day, and with the lives of outstanding thinkers in the Church, most of whom have been sainted, is sufficient evidence of his scholarship. He had a good background of both experience and scholarship

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 371 f

from which to write. "Profoundly learned, not only as a theologian, but also as a classical student, the earnest devotedness of his mind, which was at once deep and broad, taught him to humble the power of a large and cultivated intellect before the faith of Christ with the simplicity of a little child." 1

THE SPIRITUAL WRITINGS

The first of Grou's spiritual works was his Morality from St. Augustine, which appeared in Paris in 1786. It was first published in two volumes, just why is not known, since it afterward appeared in one volume. It is interesting to note that this work was published eighteen years after the "conversion" experience in the author's life. In this work he takes a passage from the Confessions of St. Augustine and discusses and develops it much the same as a preacher would a sermon. Since he had been preaching in Paris for about ten years before the work appeared, it is very probable that he had used many of the messages of which it is composed in his preaching. A great variety of subjects is covered, each dealing with some phase of doctrine or christian living which he felt needed emphasis or correction. He takes up some points in the Catholic faith and shows how they are being trans-

1. H. L. Sidney Lear: Preface of The Hidden Life of the Soul.

gressed by many of his contemporaries. He points out many of the evils of the day and brings out the teaching of the Church regarding them. In some of these he seems to be somewhat extreme but we must remember the conditions that existed in Paris at the time he wrote.

This book met with immediate success and was praised by critics of the time. Monsieur Feller spoke highly of it in his journal. "It is doubtful whether there has appeared in this century a book of morality more sound, more profoundly reasoned." ¹ It was translated into English by Rev. Alexander MacKenzie and was published in London in 1791. For some reason which the writer has not learned Father MacKenzie used the pseudonym, Alexander Clinton, in connection with his translations of Grou's works. This translation had become very rare until it had its first reissue in 1934. Since this work is cited often in other parts of this manuscript relative to the author's teaching on matters of theology and the spiritual life, we shall confine ourselves here to a few of his pertinent comments on religion and life as he observed it.

Grou evidently saw a great need for emphasis upon the minds of parents of the importance of looking after the spiritual welfare of their children. He suggests that

1. Journal Historique et Littéraire, August, 1787

they ought to pray for their children. "If there be prayers which God inspires; if there be any which he commands, and which he is inclined to hear, they are particularly those which a father or a mother puts up to him, not for the temporal prosperity, but for the eternal welfare of their family. ... Reflect that when you pray for your children you pray for yourselves." In another passage he refers to the education of children. "It is religion and morality that teach man these duties (to worship, obey and serve God), and enable him to fulfill them; on religion therefore and morality, should the education of children be grounded, as soon as a dawn of reason and understanding arises in their minds." This becomes all the more important since the consciousness of the moral law is the first thing that the soul of the child perceives. The consequent feeling of obligation to and dependence upon a supreme being should be wisely directed. "It is written in the heart of man: written with the finger of God, written at the moment they are born. As soon as reason begins to dawn, as soon as they are capable of reflection, the first thing which the soul perceives, through the help of 'the light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world' (John 1:9), is the principles of this law: the first

sentiment which the soul experiences, is that of moral good and evil. It is properly from this moment that they become men: till then they were only animals governed by a natural instinct. They then, therefore, have an idea of obligation and duty; they feel themselves tied and subjected to a being who is above them; and when they stray from this dependance by an abuse of their liberty, their conscience stings them, and their reason condemns them." 1

Grou calls attention to the fact that love in the home, love between husband and wife, or love between friends, to be pure and solid as well as happy, must be based on a mutual love for God. "That is to say, that two persons love each other truly, but inasmuch as they love God, and that the love which they have for God is the principle, the basis, and the knot of their mutual friendship. ... In this manner our love is not divided; in every heart it flows from a common center, and reunites itself to it again." He then goes further to show how this same reasoning applies to our learning to love even our enemies, who are creatures made and loved by God like ourselves and are therefore worthy of our love. "What is more reasonable also, in the principles of the Christian religion, than to love our enemies, not

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 78

on their own account, because they give us no motive to love them; but on account of God, whose creatures they are, like ourselves, whom He has loved, whom He has redeemed as He has us, and whose salvation He desires as well as ours?" Grou concludes that the love of God is a sure foundation for right conduct, in fact, the only foundation that will insure such conduct as will result in happiness. "An upright heart, pure and full of the love of God, is of all the casuists the first and the surest for our personal conduct. ... That the happiness of mankind, even in this life, is annexed to the observance of this morality, two things clearly demonstrate, reason and experience." 1

Again referring to the love of God, Grou says that God put in man the urge to love God Himself. Man is capable of loving God as he follows his urge in the human heart. "Not only canst thou know God, both in His works and in Himself; but thou art capable of loving Him. The first notion that thy reason perceives is that of God: from hence thou derivest all the other primitive notions. Thy first desire is that of possessing Him. Thy will incessantly aspires to the sovereign good, to the good that is infinite. ... The most infallible mark that thou art made to love God is that thou makest to

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 136

thyself a god of whatever thou lovest."

In another passage he defines what he believes the true love of God to be. "In what then does the true love of God consist? By what mark shall we discover it in ourselves? It consists in the determination of the will, in a free choice, by which we prefer God to everything else. Now whosoever feels this determination, whosoever has made this choice and perseveres in it, can answer for himself; and when we examine ourselves with sincerity, we cannot be deceived on this head. For this choice and this determination are attended with consequences, and produce effects." 1

Grou's observation on the relationship that should exist between man and the lower order of animals is a matter that will interest us. Because the lower animals have no soul they have no way, in themselves, of glorifying God. Man, who is also an animal, but an animal with a soul, made in the image of God and therefore capable of loving God and bringing glory to Him, is in a state between God and the other animals. Man, who has been given the other creatures to use, should glorify God with the use he makes of them. "Man, a free and intelligent creature, is in a kind of middle state between God and the other creatures that compose the universe. ... Now the intention

1. Morality from St. Augustine , p. 262

of the Creator is that, as the other creatures cannot glorify Him themselves, man should glorify Him through them, and make use of them in order to raise himself to God, and not to withdraw himself from Him. ... Our soul has, as I may say, two faces. By the one it is turned toward God; by the other it views sensible objects. ... There is here plenty of matter for a serious examination to a rational being brought up at the school of true philosophy and of true religion, which are one and the selfsame thing." Again he points out that if man will use his mind, the very creatures which he uses will lead him to God. "But let him (man) listen, in the silence of his passions, to those same creatures which he abuses. They will tell him that if the pleasure which he draws from the use of them be a gift of the Creator, he therefore ought to love Him who is the author of this pleasure, and not to seek that very pleasure." 1

In another place in this book the author observes that an honest study of nature will reveal the necessity of religion. "The law of nature points out to us the necessity of a religion; but itself is not a religion." This next citation shows the influence of Plato. The mind, going in its search in nature beyond the realm of

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 267

outward sensations, will reach the universal cause, God. "Never does their mind stop at what strikes the senses; but penetrating further on, it ascends to the universal cause, which gives being, motion, life and intelligence. They behold God as the soul of the world, as the principle that produces all; to which everything owes its qualities and its properties; from whom the animals receive their diverse instincts, and who casts a slight shadow of his perfections on the different objects in nature."

He indicates also that the laws of nature point out the characteristics of true religion in Christianity. "Finally, the law of nature points out to me in Christianity, the true characters of religion: the homage of the mind paid to God in the mysteries which I am ordered to believe; the homage of the heart in the morality which I am enjoined to practice: a morality every way holy, that in no way detracts from the law of nature, but perfects it in all its branches: a homage of the whole man both as to soul and body, in the worship which is exacted of me, in the positive precepts which are laid upon me, and in the exterior practices which are prescribed to me. ... There are three classes of good things; God and the means that lead to Him; the soul of man and its faculties; all sensible objects, such as our body and all other bodies, which exist only with a relation to ours. Those of the

first class are the most excellent; those of the last, the least estimable; the soul holds the middle rank; it is good or bad, as it adheres to that which is above it, or to that which is beneath it." 1 He says further, that the soul by its very nature indicates that it was intended for fellowship with God. "As our soul is spiritual and immortal, it is evident that the things which it can reach to of itself, and independently of the body, must be the most analogous to its nature. Such is God, who is through His essence uncreated and immortal; our soul therefore, is made for God."

In discussing human depravity and our blindness to our own short comings, Grou makes the following rather pertinent statement. "We are unwilling to be guilty, because we are unwilling to be punished. This blindness goes so far as to approve of in ourselves, what we readily condemn in others." Here is another equally as pointed. "Today, as in primitive times, it is not the doctrine of the gospel which revolts the unbelievers; but the moral consequences of this doctrine; it is not what it enjoins to believe, but what it commands to be practiced." This third one demands that man choose his position before God. "On whatsoever side man ranks himself, he must have to do

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 82f

with God, either as a Father or as a Judge: there is absolutely no middle place." 1

This book, Morality from St. Augustine, has the least value of Grou's larger works for the reader today. While he deals at length with many matters, most of what is presented on spiritual living is included in his other works in a style that is more easily grasped. Here he interprets points of theology and Church doctrine primarily, and the teaching on the spiritual life is brought in more or less incidentally.

A little book entitled Characteristics of True Devotion² was Grou's second spiritual work. It became immensely popular and there were many editions required as well as translations into other languages. Father Mac-Kenzie, "Alexander Clinton", translated it into English and had it published in London in 1791 under the title The Characters of Real Devotion. Since then there have been several other editions in English, the best of them being the one edited by Samuel H. Frisbee, published in New York, 1894. Because it is short, dealing with just one subject, and written in a very easy style and in clear and simple language, this little book met a great need in the lives of the common people. It was denounced

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 137

2. Caractères de la Vraie Dévotion, Paris, 1788

by the Jansenist journal 1 for having many errors in it, but this increased its popularity.

The book begins with an explanation of the meaning of Christian devotion. Grou says that by devotion he means just what the word, which is derived from Latin, implies. Devotion is the state of being devoted or dedicated. It is devotedness, a vowing of one's self. It is the state of being given up wholly to (something or somebody). "The being devoted to God comprises all this in the highest degree; and it adds besides, a consecration, in virtue of which he who is consecrated belongs no longer to himself, - has no longer a right over himself; but belongs by an act of religion, the most sacred and the most irrevocable, to the Supreme being to whom he has devoted himself." 2 Thus Christian devotion is that state in which man belongs to God by his own choice, by the action of his own will in dedicating himself to God.

Grou then turns to a discussion of the motives of devotedness. He points out that all advantages are of God. Since God is the creator of all things and all beings, we have our life and everything that keeps us alive at his hand. God made man for Himself, therefore "He is our beginning and our End." Another motive is

1. *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*

2. Characteristics of True Devotion, New York, 1894,
p. 25

found in the fact that when man had fallen by the rebellion of his will against God, "God reinstated man by giving us His Son." It is natural that there shall be many others to whom we shall be devoted but "every other devotedness should be subordinate to our devotion to God."

Next Grou proceeds to discuss the objects of devotion. "The first object of devotion is the glory of God and the accomplishment of His will. .. The second object is man's own sanctification. .. The third object is man's happiness. To be happy is to be united to the Sovereign good, a consequence of sanctification. A better soul is happier. ... Perfection and happiness are linked together. ... Man will become holy and happy in proportion as he promotes God's glory. ... Man's own interest must be in the background."¹

He further points out that true devotion is supernatural, in its object which is known by reason and faith, in its motives, in its means and in its end. This is because God is its object, motive, means and end. True devotion inspires an attraction for prayer, is continual in spirit, is interior in the very depths of the heart and gives life to exterior works of piety. "Whoever has given himself to God experiences that his interior admonitions are continual, guided by the spirit of grace."

1. Characteristics of True Devotion, p. 33, 36, 39, 41

But in spite of the interior nature of true devotion, Grou is convinced it should appear in external acts also. The soul needs the support of acts of piety that effect the senses and external acts seen by other persons have an effect on them. The practices of devotion must not be over done and we must make no restriction or reserve when we engage in it, but, on the other hand, give up entirely to the guidance of God's grace.

The love of God is the only foundation of devotion. Self-love and the love of God cannot reign in the same heart, therefore, the senses and the will must be mortified and held in check. We must "wait calmly until God manifests His designs." Devotion is fervent, faithful, discreet, does not listen to the imagination, docile, judgeth not itself, indulgent, active, zealous for virtue and fair. Devotion perfects and corrects character. "When I speak of remoulding nature, it is not to be understood that the character is changed into an opposite one. The foundation of every character is good; why, then, should grace change it? the foundation indeed remains, but whatever self-love has added to it that is vicious disappears, and that which is good is perfected. Each moral quality loses what is in excess and acquires what is wanting to it." Devotion also aids the development of the

mind. "To the knowledge furnished by pure and sound reason, is added the more solid, surer, and more sublime lights of revelation." The final pages tell us that true devotion "elevates the heart of man above all that is not God", that the devout man possesses true happiness and that Jesus Christ is the grand model of perfect devotedness.

As we have said in a former chapter, Grou edited a new edition of Père Pierre Marie's The Science of the Crucifix. As a continuation of this he prepared a work of his own entitled The Practical Science of the Crucifix in the use of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.¹ This book was never as popular as the original work by Père Marie although it was well received and has since been reprinted. We know of no English translation of this work. In this book Grou starts with the premise that the crucifix presents all the lessons of the Christian religion. "Jesus Christ on the cross is the answer to everything that we need to know to worship God" ... "Therefore when a person comes to do penance, he should hold before his mind the crucifix and, as it were, "fasten his eyes on Christ on the cross." It will tell him of the terrible blackness of his sin and his inability to save himself. It will set

1. La Science pratique du Crucifix dans l'usage des sacrements de Penitence et d'Eucharistie, Paris, 1790.

before him the perfect example of self-denial and submission to the will of God. These and many other lessons that the crucifix proclaims will stir the heart of man to penitence.

In a similar manner, Grou says that when a person comes to Communion, he should have before him the crucifix for there is a close relationship between the cross and the Eucharist. Christ intended in the Eucharist to keep the memory of His cross and suffering burning in the hearts of the faithful and that each time they receive the Eucharist they should also receive the cross. We see in the Body of Christ, in the Eucharist, a victim offered on the cross and His blood spilled for the redemption of sin. In the Eucharist the faithful Christian should behold in the crucifix, Christ on the Cross, and down in his heart join Him there and give up to God's will and pleasure even as Christ did.

This book was written for devotional reading for Catholics and because of the peculiarly Catholic subject matter, it will be of little interest to other Christians.

Spiritual Maxims,¹ published in 1789, contains twenty-four maxims which were originally set in verse "that they may be grasped and retained more easily by the memory" and followed with an explanation and discussion

1. Maximes Spirituelles avec des Explications, Paris, 1789.

of each one. The explanation of the first maxim begins with the statement that "All holiness is contained in two points: knowledge of God and knowledge of self. .. The former lifts it (the soul) to the abyss of Divine perfections; the latter sinks it to its own abyss of nothingness and sin. And the great marvel is, that this very knowledge of God which lifts man up, humbles him at the same time by the comparison of himself with God; and self-knowledge, while it humbles him, lifts him up by necessitating his approach to God, as the assuager of his misery." 1 Thus Grou associates the elevation of man with his humiliation as he learns of God and of himself.

In discussing the second maxim he points out the fact that our liberty was given to us so that by the free exercise of it we might honor God. The "surrender of liberty is the same thing as devotion to God; because devotion is only an engagement to forsake self-will, and follow the will of God. .. The gift of liberty to God may be made in two ways, of which one depends on ourselves, and the other on God. ... one is called the Active and the other the Passive way." This surrender of liberty is the beginning of the interior way, where our devotion is

down in the very depths of the heart. It is concerned primarily with our inward dispositions and secondarily with the outward acts of piety, which, if they are of much value are the outcome of our inward dispositions.

The rest of the book gives us maxims which deal with the improvement of our devotion. Among the matters emphasized are the Practice of the Presence of God, proper observance of the Sacraments, the love of God, mortification, the practice of Recollection and Meditation, the natural spirit and the spirit of Christ, temptations, conquering self-love and contemplative prayer.

The Spiritual Maxims was well received and won favorable comments from critics. Monsieur Feller said of it, "Few spiritual works contain more illuminating and profound rules for the guidance of conscience and the way of the spirit." 1 J. M. Neale, in the preface to his English version of the work, published in London in 1874, said, "These *Maximes Spirituelles*, rough and inelegant, but singularly deep and earnest, are perhaps among the most valuable writings of their experienced author. Widely differing from the ordinary Jesuit teaching of the present day, the spirit of *Père Grou* is almost identical with that embodied in our sound old English ascetic books."

1. Journal Historique et Littéraire August, 1792

The writer agrees that in value it ranks next to The School of Jesus Christ and the Manual for Interior Souls. The fact that there have been several later editions in English would tend to corroborate this opinion.

A very small book entitled Maxims for the Conduct of Life ¹ was written by Pere Grou for Thomas Weld, the oldest son in the family at Lulworth. It was not published until 1874, seventy-one years after the author's death. It seems never to have been translated into English. The author begins with the assumption that a decision has already been made to give the self to God. He then proceeds to give maxims by which to live a christian life, a life devoted to God. He presents a rule and then proceeds to discuss it and interpret its meaning as applied to life. He discusses such matters as simplicity and uprightness, the giving of the liberty to God, discretion, the love of God, the practice of the presence of God, mortification and prayer.

The Interior of Jesus and Mary ² one of Pere Grou's larger works, was written for Mary Weld who was his spiritual child. Père Cadrés says that it was printed without the consent of Miss Weld and that the French text,

1. Maximes pour la conduite de la Vie, adressées à un jeune Anglais Catholique, Paris, 1874
2. L'Intérieur de Jésus et de Marie, Paris, 1815

which was published in two volumes, has many errors. These errors are such that Cadrés thought it important enough to include several pages of corrections from the original manuscripts. There have been several English versions of this work and it seems probable that all of them contain the errors referred to above.

In this work Grou starts with the premise that Jesus is our perfect example in all things. In his preface he says of Him, "To understand His heavenly doctrine, we need but study His sacred life; for every maxim He inculcated He first strictly reduced to practice; every precept He imposed, every council He recommended, He first accomplished, even to the letter." He also says that in treating of the Interior dispositions of Mary, he will confine himself to the gospels and the teaching of the Church.

From this beginning he proceeds to take Jesus Christ and interpret His interior dispositions from His glorious place at the right hand of the Father in heaven to his conception and union with flesh in the Incarnation; he then discusses His interior dispositions during His prenatal existence and tells of the communications that He must have made to His mother; he then takes Him from His birth all the way through to His death and resurrection

explaining His Interior disposition in connection with each great event.

The same procedure is followed in the discussion of the Interior of Mary. When he has set forth a disposition, such as self-mortification, from the Interior of either Jesus or Mary, he then makes it apply to the human soul and suggests that the soul should strive to imitate it in her own interior, the depths of her own heart.

While this is not, in the writer's opinion, one of Grou's best works, it is of value because he gives a very exhaustive treatment to a subject that is not often presented.

Meditations in the form of a Retreat on the Love of God, With a Little Writing on the Gift of One's Self to God, 1 was published by Père Grou in London in 1796. The latter part, On the Gift of One's Self to God, appeared in English in a small volume published in New York in 1887 and the first part appeared in English in another volume entitled, Meditations Upon the Love of God, and was published in London in 1898 with Teresa Fitzgerald as translator and Richard F. Clarke as editor. Later French publishers also have made two books of this work as indicated in Somervögel's Bibliography. 2 We shall deal with

1. Méditations en forme de Retraite sur l'Amour de Dieu, avec un petit écrit sur le don de soi-même à Dieu, London, 1796.
2. Somervögel et de Backer: Bibliothèque de Compagnie de Jésus.

the Self-Consecration or (The Gift of One's Self to God) separately and confine our remarks here to the first and main part of the original book. An English edition entitled Meditations on the Love of God was published in London in 1928.

This work has not proven to be as popular as several of Grou's other works. It is built on the premise that the love of God is the very foundation of religion and devotion. We are told how the perfect nature of God compared to our own will compel us to love Him as soon as we have knowledge of what He is and of what we ourselves are. The impulse to love God comes from God Himself; it is in the very depths of man's moral nature. The love of God requires the devotion of all of man, there can be no reservation.

He shows that the love of God is directly related to our love for our fellowmen and our love for ourselves. We only love others as we should when the love of God burns in our hearts. We can only appreciate and love our selves rightly when guided by the love of God from within the depths of our heart, otherwise self-love will rule.

Grou says that the "practice of the love of God embraces nearly all the virtues, they are but the exercise of that love in different directions." Many matters re-

lating to the Christian life are discussed in this connection: self-denial, suffering, mortification of the will, humility, observance of the Sacraments, solitude, prayer, generosity and numerous others. "Love by its nature longs to give. It is never satisfied except when giving. .. It is happy when it has stripped itself bare in the service of God. .. When love has taken possession of a heart it dominates it altogether." Thus everything in that heart is controlled by the Love of God. Toward this Grou directs every Christian to strive.

Next we shall consider four of Grou's short works, the first having been mentioned in connection with his Meditations on the Love of God. This little book, Retreat on the Gift of One's Self to God, 1 as we have said was first published in English as a separate volume under the title Self-Consecration or (The Gift of One's Self to God).

It is very easy to read and is intended to inspire men to a deeper devotion. It begins with the presentation of the fact that the giving of the self to God is the most important thing in the Christian life from the human standpoint. He then proceeds to show how this is true by explaining that man is made for God, therefore he cannot be really happy until he is united to God and he cannot give God the glory which is required without giving himself to

1. Retraite sur le don de soi-même à Dieu

God. "Until the heart is entirely God's, there is no repose, there is something beyond which it always longs for or regrets. ... But the human heart can only possess God in so much as God takes possession of it. .. God has created us for His glory; it is the first aim of creation, and it should be our first aim in His service. But how can we be a means to His glory except by yielding ourselves entirely to Him? That which glorifies Him in our actions cannot be what we invent ourselves, though intended for His honor, but what he wills to do in us and through us. .. The act of giving ourselves without reserve to Him, is properly the only one which gives Him glory; all acts are but the consequence of this one, and are valuable only as its consequence. .. But what is it to love, if not to give one's self to the object loved? The property of love is to pour out all that it can give; it is imperfect so long as it keeps back anything; and the heart which is truly God's, can never be content if there is the least reservation with which it can reproach itself. .. We give in advance a general consent to everything that He shall judge necessary for our perfection, and while this consent exists, it clearly extends to every particular operation of His grace within us."¹

Man, by giving himself to God, responds to God's creative act. God created man as a free being with

1. J. Nicolas Grou: Self-Consecration or (The Gift of One's Self to God), translated from the French, New York, 1887, p. 30, 34f.

liberty and free-will; with the intent that man should honor and serve Him in the use of it; man corresponds to or fulfills that creative act by giving his liberty back to God. "God has given us liberty that we may employ it in His service, and consequently that through it we may do Him homage by always holding it submissive to His will. He has not made us free to emancipate us from dependence but that our dependence may be voluntary and of free choice." 1

Another of Père Grou's small works, published first in English in 1817 from the original manuscript was called The Christian Sanctified by the Lord's Prayer.² It was again published in English in New York in 1885, before the French edition appeared. In this little book the author impresses on us that no one knows how to pray except those who are taught by Jesus Christ. The Master's prayer was perfect, therefore, those who pray it earnestly will be inspired to strive, by God's help, toward the perfection which is set before them.

Each petition in the Lord's Prayer is analyzed and discussed and applied to the person praying. We are shown that the person praying must have inward dispositions that are submitted to the will of God before he can sincerely offer these petitions to God.

1. Self-Consecration, p. 72.

2. Le Chrétien sanctifié par l'Oraison Dominicale, Paris, 1858

"This prayer, as a matter of fact contains everything. ...But like all prayer, it is meant for the heart rather than the mind, .. it is important to feel it. ... It is an abridgement of the Gospel, the very essence of all that is most perfect in the moral teaching of Jesus; it should therefore influence all our thoughts, words and actions. ... Our Lord intended to put perfection before us in this prayer. ...Therefore to repeat it as it ought to be repeated. ...is to be on the path of perfection." 1

The writer found this little book very helpful and would recommend it for reading and meditation. Much of the material in this work is repeated in The School of Jesus Christ.

Another of Grou's small works which was produced while he lived at Lulworth was the Retreat on What a Christian is. 2 The topic itself will indicate to us what is the nature of the material covered in this little work, that a Christian is one who is submitted to the will of God and follows the example of Jesus Christ. However, the writer has not seen it and will not comment.

A fifth small work produced during this period was the Retreat on the knowledge and the love of Jesus Christ.3

1. J. Nicolas Grou: The Christian Sanctified by the Lord's Prayer, translated from the French by Ellen M. Fogg, New York, 1885, (selected)
2. Retraite sur ce que c'est qu'un Chrétien
3. Retraite sur la connaissance et l'amour de Jésus Christ

This is carried both by Somervögel and Cadrés but the writer has found it unavailable. It is small and the title indicates the nature of the materials presented.

Probably the most widely known of Grou's works is his Manual for Interior Souls.¹ The materials in this work are messages composed and written by the author in nine small manuscript books for use in conferences, especially at the religious houses of Paris. Cadrés tells us that the originals were lost but a copy made by Madame d'Adhémar was published, first in three parts and finally as one volume in Paris in 1847 under the editorship of Abbé Lesurre. The English version was published in London in 1889. It has since been republished several times. The first forty chapters were translated into English by Miss Ellen M. Fogg, and this book was reissued in 1927 by H. L. Sidney Lear.² The translation is not literal but the content is correctly presented.

This book deals largely with contemplative prayer. It is written for persons who are already Christian and are trying to find a way to walk closer to God in the Interior Way, that is, in the inner dispositions of their hearts. "This book of Père Grou is the work of a master of the spiritual life who speaks in a clear and decisive

1. Manuel de Ames Intérieures, Paris, 1847

2. The Hidden Life of the Soul, London, 1927

manner, as only those can who are thoroughly acquainted with their subject. But it should be understood by those who read it that it is not intended for beginners, but for such as have made some sort of progress in knowledge of the spiritual life. For much that he says is put so tersely that those whose knowledge of the subject is not within measurable relativity to that of the writer may easily miss the full sense of his words, and thus be lead to look on some parts and passages as unreal or unmeaning, or at least exaggerated." 1

In this work Grou begins with a definition of true and solid devotion. "True and solid devotion is, then, that disposition of the heart by which we are ready to do and to suffer, without exception or reserve, everything which comes from God's good pleasure, everything which is the will of God. And this disposition is the most excellent of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit." In the very beginning he emphasizes that the devout person is a person of prayer. "The true devout man is a man of prayer, whose sole delight is to be with God, and to speak with Him, and who scarcely ever loses his sense of the presence of God. .. Because he is always united to God in his heart, and is guided in everything by His spirit." 2

1. Preface to Manual for Interior Souls, London, 1896

2. Manual for Interior Souls, p. 1.

From this beginning Grou deals with the inner dispositions necessary for a more perfect union with God, the means of attaining them and the effects their possession will have in the lives of those striving for perfect devotion to God.

Of the many things of outstanding interest in this book, there are three to which the writer would call particular attention. The first is the emphasis on the importance of following unquestioningly the will of God as it is revealed, within the heart by action of the Holy Spirit or in outward circumstances, moment by moment. This is brought out very clearly in the chapter On The Employment of Time. The similarity of this chapter to Père de Caussade, who preceded Grou in the school of Jesuit mystics by a generation, is very striking. It is almost identical with his Sacrament of the Present Moment.

The second, which is closely akin to the first, is his chapter On Total Abandonment. "The height of perfection is to serve God for His own sake alone, without any thought as a rule to self-interest, either for time for eternity... God alone, by an extra ordinary grace, can bring a soul into this state, and lead her by the hand to the end of it. .. He makes her pass from one renunciation

to another, from one trial to another, all becoming more interior and spiritual. .. God leads her thus from precipice to precipice, until at last he brings her to the edge of the great abyss, and invites her to cast herself down there by an utter and generous resignation of her whole self into his hands. .. It is truly here that we may say that the things which are impossible to men are possible and easy to God. He Himself will prepare the soul, she need only to leave it to Him; He will change all her interior dispositions; He will purify and detach her little by little from self-love; He will inspire her with a holy hatred of herself, until He convinces her that she is indeed worthy of condemnation.... This is the state of perfection for the creature."1 This doctrine which is alluded to in some of his other works brought from many the charge that Grou was a Quietist. We will refer to this in the last chapter.

The third is also related to the two already mentioned. This is the chapter On Spiritual Childhood in which the matter presented is the same in most particulars as that of St. Thérèse of Lisieux in her Little Way. Perhaps she received her inspiration from Grou. Innocence, dependence, lack of self-judgement, lack of reflection, openness and candor, and obedience are matters stressed. This amounts

1. Manual for Interior Souls , Chapter on Total Abandonment.

to unquestioned dependence upon God and unreasoned obedience to God. It is interesting to note this comparison.

This is considered by many as one of the best works published in the last century among Catholic mystics. It is so classified in Hastings Encyclopedia. 1

The final work that we shall discuss, written by Père Grou in his latter years when his style had become perfected, is his The School of Jesus Christ.² Father Alexander MacKenzie (Alexander Clinton) started an English edition of this work, the first volume of which was published in Dublin in 1801. The second never appeared so it is assumed that the translator died without finishing his work. No complete edition of the work appeared until 1885 when it was published in Paris from the original manuscript. The chapters in this book on prayer were translated into English about 1892 by Teresa Fitzgerald and published under the editorship of Richard F. Clark with the title, How to Pray. This little book has had many editions. The first complete English edition of The School of Jesus Christ appeared in London in 1932, having been translated by Mrs. Rodolph Stawell with an introduction by Dom Roger Hudleston.

1. Hastings: Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Article On Catholic Mysticism, New York, 1928
2. L'Ecole de Jesus Christ, Paris, 1885

This book, which is Grou's largest, has a preface by the author in which he says that Christians need to do more than the ordinary works of piety. They need to go to the school of Jesus Christ. "They must hold in their minds the vision of Christian perfection as Jesus Christ saw it: they must have in their hearts the feelings that were His: and in everything they do they must make it their aim to destroy the old, natural man in themselves, and substitute the new man, the man of grace. Only those who are Christians of this kind, or are seriously making it their business to become so, have a right to boast that they are disciples of Jesus Christ. ... They must listen to the lessons of the divine School master; earnestly try to understand them and apply them to themselves; keep them constantly in mind, and never fail to change everything in themselves which does not conform to them. This should be the constant subject of their thoughts and prayers, the aim towards which every detail of their lives is directed. In that school there is always something to learn; at every step new country opens out; and the obligation to advance still further grows with the knowledge acquired." 1

The book, after a short introductory section which begins with Jesus Christ Calls Us To His School, contains

1. The School of Jesus Christ, Author's Preface.

fifty lesson . The first lessons deals with repentance under the title, Penitence. The succeeding lessons, while not in every case directly related to one another, are all instructions for the advancement of the Christian toward his perfection. There are several lessons on the love of God and the love of our neighbor, a large section is given to a discussion of the Beatitudes and ten lessons deal with prayer. There are others dealing with evil and sin in the heart, the kingdom of God, carrying the cross, humility, perseverance, judging, etc.

Every lesson begins with the quotation of a passage of scripture which is a saying of Jesus Christ and, with this as a text, the subject is developed. The book covers many matters but each lesson is really a unit in itself. This and the fact that it is written freely and simply makes it easy reading. It can be understood with much greater ease than the Manual for Interior Souls, The Interior of Jesus and Mary, or even Morality from St. Augustine.

Many consider this to be Grou's best work. "It is, without any possible doubt, the most important of Pere Grou's; the most remarkable for the depth of the subject matter, as it is also the most useful and necessary for the period when he wrote it and for our own day."¹ With this opinion the writer will agree except for the state-
1. Père F. Doyette: Introduction, L'École de Jesus Christ

ment about the depth.

There is something about the writings of Nicolas Grou that makes one feel that he speaks with the voice of authority and experience. He is always direct and unevasive, and though he is often speaking from experience, he seldom says so, and the reader loses consciousness of the author as he becomes engrossed in his subject. "Jean Nicolas Grou's writings are characterized by an absence of exaggeration which gives peculiar weight to his teaching. Those who will take Père Grou as a spiritual guide, and study his teachings thoughtfully and prayerfully, will find themselves upon a track of earnest steadfast devotion."¹

We conclude this chapter by observing that Grou was far more interested in his subject matter than he was in his style. He would be the first to acknowledge this fact. There are times when his style becomes rather rough and sometimes his sentences become very involved but through it his thought is well sustained and we seldom have to re-read to understand.

The fact that many of his works have been republished and new translations have been made in the last fifteen years is further evidence that as a spiritual writer he belongs among the great.

1. H. L. Sidney Lear: Preface, The Hidden Life of the Soul

CHAPTER IV

JEAN NICOLAS GROU, PRIEST AND SPIRITUAL GUIDE

It was as a priest and director of souls that Nicolas Grou was most highly valued during his life. During his last residence in Paris he had become a preacher of considerable repute and was in great demand as a leader of conferences on the spiritual life. He was recognized as a master of the art of leading others along the road toward a life of deeper devotion. His excellent direction is evidenced further by the effect his guidance had on the Weld family at Lulworth, where five of the children were lead to find in religion the place to invest their lives.

We discover from the many references in his works to directors of souls, their importance, their qualifications and their responsibilities, that Grou felt very keenly the obligation that became his when a person came to him honestly seeking spiritual guidance. The responsibility of his position was twofold. He was responsible to God to represent Him in presenting the Truth and responsible to the seeker after Truth to show him the way to find the Truth. He has some pertinent things to say about what direction of souls is, the authority of the director, the qualifications of a good director and the use to be made

of a director.

Let us note in the very beginning that Grou accepts the usual Catholic position regarding the authority of the priest. He traces this back to Jesus Christ and establishes the Apostolic succession. The Apostles were called by Jesus Christ while on earth and when He left He charged them to teach men the things that they must believe and practice in order to be saved. The divine authority to teach and interpret the Gospel and the things which had been commanded them was passed on to them by Jesus Christ Himself. As the Apostles were scattered abroad and established congregations of Christians in various countries, they called men to carry on their work in their absence and after their death. To these "chosen" men, chosen under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, they passed on the same authority to teach and interpret which the Master had given them. So it has passed on to "chosen" men from generation to generation. "As the Apostles, then represented Him after His ascension into heaven, being sent by Him even as He was sent by His Father, so they were in the same way represented by the bishops whom they sent, even as they themselves had been sent by Jesus Christ; and these again were represented by their successors in the centuries that followed."¹

"Nevertheless, according to the order of His (Christ's) providence, He makes use of the ministry of priests for the direction of souls; on that ministry He bestows his grace, and through it He gives advice and instruction. He is ever the Master: He and He only can speak to the heart. But He speaks to it especially when His ministers, in the exercise of their functions, speak to the outward ear; He wills that they be heard and obeyed, as His representatives." 1

"Notwithstanding so many helps and motives, foreseeing that I should still offend Him, he obviates the evil which I might commit. He only demands of me a sorrow for my faults, and an avowal of them at the feet of the minister, who is vested with His authority."2

The Apostles were endowed with divine power to understand the promise of Jesus to be with them always. This divine power is also granted to their successors in each generation. Therefore the correct interpretation of the Gospel can be found only in the priesthood of the Church. The individual priest gets his authority from the "Body of Pastors", the priesthood of the Church.

The duties of the priest are, as Grou saw it, primarily to preach, hear confessions and direct persons along the path which leads to Christian perfection. He says

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 25

2. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 180

that confession and direction should not be separated. Often both are needed at the same time. The priest, then, should be prepared to be both confessor and director. "We ought not to draw a distinction between the director and the confessor, any more than we draw a distinction between the physician who cures an illness and him who prescribes a rule for preserving health. The confessor hears the acknowledgment of our sins, and absolves us from the guilt of them; he tells us what we are to do to avoid sin in the future, and he gives us wholesome advice, that we may advance in virtue. The tribunal of penance, then, includes confession and direction, and it is as essential for it to preserve us from faults as to absolve us from them."¹

To Grou, the most important work of the priest and probably the most neglected is that of director of souls. He defines the work of a director in the following passage very clearly. "To direct a soul is to lead it in the ways of God, it is to teach the soul to listen for the divine inspiration, and to respond to it; it is to suggest to the soul the practice of all the virtues proper for its particular state; it is not only to preserve that soul in purity and innocence, but to make it advance in perfection: in a word, it is to contribute as much as possibly may be

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 128

in raising that soul to the degree of sanctity which God has destined for it."1 It is evident that Grou, himself, tried to carry out these principles in his own work as a guide and director in spiritual matters.

Grou had some very definite ideas about the spiritual qualifications of a director of souls. He ought, first, to be one who gives primary thought and consideration to spiritual matters. "The spirit of true religion teaches ministers of the Gospel, that the care of souls ought to be limited to things spiritual, and it only allows interference in temporal matters when charity requires it of them, and then with much reserve and circumspection, both lest they should injure themselves, and lest they should lessen in the minds of others the reverence due to their office." 2

The director should also be a man led of the spirit of God, humble and without pride. He warns against some who are filled with false pride and false wisdom. "Those directors who have not the Spirit of God are thus apt to presume on their gifts, fancying themselves more enlightened than others: endued with a singular talent for guiding souls which others know nothing about. They are proud of the number and quality of their penitents; they use secret devices to increase their number. If they are not con-

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 128

2. Spiritual Maxims p. 192

tinually boasting of their powers, that work is done for them by other lips. They express pity for those who apply to other priests, and imply that it is a matter for regret that persons so well disposed should not have fallen into better hands. ... Directors of this kind have an intense spirit of domineering, and exercise despotic sway over souls. They do not bring them into subjection to grace, but to their own notions. They never tell them to hearken to the voice of God speaking to their own hearts; God is supposed to speak through their instrumentality alone, and any inward inspiration, not in accordance with their views, is to be treated as an illusion." 1 Such directors as are here described are the victims of self-love and should be avoided in favor of an humble man, lead of the Spirit of God, who will lead the soul to follow the leadings of the grace that stirs within her heart.

The director should not be given to jealousy and rivalry for these are evidences of the presence of self-love in his heart. "But who can enumerate the miserable littlenessess and rivalries which beset some preachers and confessors, who are otherwise pious and estimable men."2 These often are the result of natural weakness and should lead to humbleness before God and an earnest

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 200 f

2. Ibid pl78

plea for His help to overcome them.

The director should be a man who gives attention to all who come to him and particularly the poor. It is Grou's observation that those priests who give more time to the poor have more spiritual light and grace. "All Christians have a deep interest in discerning the true from the counterfeit ministers of Jesus Christ, since on their zeal so greatly depends the progress of the soul. Those are secure against mistakes who attach themselves to the instructors, the confessors, the directors of the poor -- that is, to those who, without excluding the rich, devote their principal exertions and consecrate their first affections to the poor. There can be no doubt that these receive a more abundant infusion of heavenly light and grace; that they preach with more unction; that they exercise their functions in the holy tribunal with more efficacy; that they are influenced by more upright views; that they act with more zeal, more patience, more prudence and more success...If he speaks emphatically and authoritatively it is not with a view of assuming importance in the eyes of his hearers, but rather to exalt him in whose name he speaks and to produce a stronger impression on those he teaches."¹ He probably speaks with authority also because of his experience with God and his positive

1. Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. I, p. 182f

conviction.

The director should be well versed in spiritual things by reading and study. He should constantly have before him the words of Jesus Christ, the teachings of the Church and the experiences of the saints. But this knowledge is not enough, he should know the way of the interior life by his own experience. "It is necessary that the confessor should be, as it were, the voice of God, the instrument of divine grace, the co-operator with the work of the Holy Spirit, and, consequently, that he should be an interior man, a man of prayer, a man well versed in spiritual things, as much by his own experience as by study and reading; that he should have no natural designs, either of vanity or self-interest, but that he should only consider the glory of God and the good of souls; that he should never act according to the leadings of his own spirit, but that he should judge of the things of God by the Spirit of God." 1

Again Grou points out it is necessary that the director recognize that the leadings of the grace of God are in the depths of the hearts of those who seek guidance. The soul itself will be often unable to understand, but the wise director will see and recognize the work of grace and show the soul how to follow. As indicated in the previous passage, Grou realizes that this knowledge

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 128 f

is not gained by study only, but by experience as well. "This knowledge is personal, more extensive and more intimate, in proportion as we are advanced in the ways of God. It has for its object the hidden operations of grace for the sanctification of souls, and the maxims that are proper to raise a Christian to perfection. Those who are destined to conduct others in the path of salvation cannot be too much versed in this, which is not learnt by study, but by recollection, by a spiritual death to one's self, and especially to one's own will."¹ The director should be able to recognize the work of grace in a soul when the soul opens itself to him. He directs the soul, not according to his own judgement but in accordance with the judgement of God which has been made known to him through his study and experience.

The matter of the qualification of the director is well summed up in the following passage. "He should be a man of an interior spirit, experienced in heavenly things, perfectly dead to self, closely bound to God, devoid of self-will, desiring neither to rule nor enslave the soul he leads; seeking in nothing his own glory and interest, but in all things the interests and glory of God; susceptible of no attachment save that inspired by charity; exercising his ministry with perfect independence; above

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 253.

all method and system, infinitely pliable to the inspirations of grace; able to assume different attitudes in order to meet the different needs of souls, and God's designs regarding them; wise with Divine wisdom, gentle without softness, compassionate without weakness, firm without rigidity, zealous without hastiness; making himself all things to all men; condescending, in a certain degree, to human misery, prejudice and weakness; perfectly calm and patient; reproving, consoling, urging, checking, yielding, or resisting, according to circumstances; sustaining, encouraging, humbling, showing the soul its own progress, or else concealing it, as may be most needful. In fact, he ought to be a man who does nothing of himself in the matter of direction, but who seconds the work of God, without either hurrying or slackening it; following grace step by step, proceeding exactly as far as, and no further than, it leads."¹

Those who wish to give themselves entirely to God must realize that there are certain dispositions that are necessary on their part. First among these is an inward desire^{to}/do the will of God completely and a willingness to submit themselves docilely to Him. They are fit for direction in the interior way only "in the same measure as they are docile, obedient, simple, straightforward,

upright; resolved not only to avoid sin, but to practice all the good which God requires of them, to correspond faithfully to grace, and to refuse nothing to God, whatever may be the cost to human nature; finally, to die to themselves, that they may live entirely to God: and this can be attained only by the spirit of prayer and interior mortification."1.

The second thing that must be realized by those who walk the interior way is that they must have a director. This applies to a priest as well as the lay Christian for no person is able to direct himself. This is due to the fact that to walk the interior way the soul must renounce its own spirit. Therefore, if the soul tries to guide itself it will fall victim to the errors of self-love. "But the application of these rules belongs to the director. We should not judge ourselves, else we should run the risk of self-deception. Humility and obedience are the two points on which the interior life turns; therefore when we believe it to be God's will that we should leave the ordinary way, we should candidly represent our spiritual state to our spiritual guide, and thus enable him to decide. This is the more necessary because without his advice we cannot maintain ourselves in the different stages of prayer, and we ought to keep

him informed of all that takes place in our souls, in order that he may shield us from delusion, and strengthen us against temptations and trials." 1 In another place Grou says, "It is necessary to have a director, because the greatest mistake of all is to wish to guide ourselves, and the greatest illusion we can fall into is to think we are in a fit state to guide ourselves. Even the most clever man, and he who is in the best dispositions, is blind as to his interior conduct; and even if he were a saint, and capable of directing others, he is not capable of directing himself; and if he thinks he can, it is through presumption. ... This way of perfection is full of darkness and obscurities, of temptations and precipices; and to wish to walk alone in it is to expose ourselves to our own ruin." 2

Having then seen and accepted the necessity of having a director in order to walk the interior way, the soul must next choose for herself a good director. In this matter God must take the lead. "There is no point concerning which we are more easily blinded, or more apt to be prejudiced. Therefore, we ought to lay the matter in God's hands, simply and honestly resolving to take the person He points out, in spite of prejudice or aversion,

1. Spiritual Maxims p.141

2. Manual for Interior Souls p. 130

or any human feeling whatever. .. Then we cannot too earnestly pray God that He would find us a director of this kind; for it is one of the greatest graces He can bestow, and one which may be the source of all others."¹ "If we leave the matter entirely in God's hands, He will guide us to the director He wishes us to have, either by a secret instinct, or by the advice of pious persons whom we can trust."²

Grou has some very important things to say about the use to be made of the director after he is chosen. Naturally there should be mutual respect between the director and the soul being guided. It is supremely important that the soul be absolutely frank and open with the director. Nothing must be concealed from him at any time. "Never conceal anything from the director, under any pretext whatsoever, even if it should be thoughts and suspicions that we have had against him."³ In another passage the same thing is expressed very clearly. "Through the whole course of direction, nothing ought to be kept hidden, whether as to the lights given us by God, or the desires and aversions of nature, or the suggestions of Satan, whose sleights and artifices we cannot unravel without aid. Anything which secret pride,

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 26 f
2. Manual for Interior Souls p. 131
3. Ibid p. 133

or temptations of the devil leads us to hide or disguise, is sure to be the point which is most important we should mention; and, however humiliating, it must never be kept back."¹

Finally, the soul must obey the director in all the judgements and advice that he gives her. Grou lays great stress on obedience in many places. He points out that we must bear in mind that our director is sent us by God, therefore, we should look beyond him and see in his judgements the will of God for us. "We must hear his advice and his decision reverently, as if they issued from the lips of God. There must be no arguing with him, nor must we even mentally dispute anything contrary to our own ideas. .. we must punctually and faithfully perform all that the director bids us do; and if through weakness or indolence, or any other reason, we have failed, we must tell him so. By this faithfulness alone we can advance."² This same point is reiterated in the Manual for Interior Souls. In another place he seems to indicate that the director should be followed even when you feel sure that he is wrong. However, if you obey and the feeling persists, you may take it that grace is leading you to change directors. "If, through lack of knowledge,

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 28

2. Ibid p. 31

or through prejudice against contemplative prayer, the director should decide mistakenly concerning our state, we ought at once to acquiesce in his decision, and do as he desires. ... Yet we should feel a discomfort, and inward constraint, which would be a certain sign that he is removing us from our proper position, and making us resist the workings of God. Then we might consult other persons more enlightened and follow their advice."¹

The responsibilities of a confessor and director, as Grou understood them, made him take very seriously the needs of every person who came to him for guidance. We are told that he was always gracious and sympathetic, that he was ever humble, that he gave every one as much time as he desired, that he was always patient and continuously sought the spiritual advancement of those who sought his advice. Such was Grou, the confessor and director of souls, the priest who felt accountable to God for his stewardship in his divinely appointed office.

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 141 f

CHAPTER V

THE THEOLOGY OF JEAN NICOLAS GROU

In any discussion of the theology of Nicolas Grou, we must first bear in mind that he accepted without question the doctrines and dogmas of the Church. Therefore, to find what he believed, we might turn to the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the additional pronouncements in the creed of pope Pius IV. But the thinking of this brilliant philosopher led him far beyond the pronouncements of the creeds. He sought to interpret his faith in the light of the scriptures, history, the philosophy of the ancients, the teachings of the church fathers, the lives of the saints and his own experience.

St. Augustine, 353-430, was by far the greatest influence that made itself felt in Grou's theology. He was, so to speak, Grou's theological and spiritual father. Grou writes of him in glowing terms. "This last (St Augustine), especially, who so well understood the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and made such good use of it for his own sanctification and the teaching and edification of others; this man of towering intellect, who had explored every form of human knowledge, and whose

genius was so profound and so sublime that, in the pagan world, none but Plato can approach him; this great Doctor was one of those little ones of whom Jesus speaks. ... After he had dedicated himself to God, and made his mind and heart entirely submissive to grace, it was his delight to read the sacred books; he continually invoked the Father of Lights, that he might understand them; and he studied them, not to increase his reputation, but to glorify God, to defend the Church, to conform his life to them, and to give spiritual nourishment to his people."¹

We must bear in mind also as we consider Grou's theology that he was himself a Jesuit and therefore his work and thinking would naturally be influenced by Ignatius Loyola and his Spiritual Exercises. In fact, all Jesuit writers and thinkers will have a distinctive character running through them which will place them in a sort of school to themselves, which will distinguish them from the writers in other great orders and traditions of spirituality in the Catholic Church.

We readily see from our survey of Grou's writings that he is both an ascetic and a mystic. However, to classify him further than this is a matter of some difficulty. A search for some foundation on which to make a further classification has revealed that in Poulain ² and

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 421

2. A. Poulain: The Graces of Interior Prayer, London, 1912

Bremond¹ we are given some ground on which to work. Bremond has two schools of Jesuit spiritual writers which he seems to think are opposed to each other. One, that headed by Rodriguez, is largely ascetic in its teaching. The other, headed by Lallement, is also mystic in its teaching. Poulain agrees with the two divisions but he contends that they are not opposed, but are really complementary. "The three writers/^(Lallement, Surin and Regoleuc)referred to have sometimes been said to represent a school apart in the Society of Jesus, with regard to their spirituality. ... Such an error is easily understood. They wrote on the subject of mysticism, while the bulk of their brethren taught ascetical theology, reducing it to a method. The subjects treated are different, but not opposed to one another. Mysticism does not contradict asceticism it completes it."²

It would seem from this that those who wrote and taught mysticism as well as asceticism were further advanced in the spiritual life and its theology. This opinion is expressed by D. Roger Huddleston in his introduction to Morality from St. Augustine. "There can be no doubt that Grou belongs to the Lallemant group, and not to that of Rodriguez and Scaramelli, the former of whom he dismisses with the words, 'Rodriguez is excellent for beginners.' The line of his spiritual genealogy is

1. H. Bremond: Histoire Litteraire du Sentiment Religieux en France
2. The Graces of Interior Prayer, p. 602.

Lallemant, Rigoleuc, Surin, de Caussade and Grou." A passage from Grou indicates that he feels that asceticism and mysticism are complementary. "There are two kinds of recollection: one, active, which is the work of the will aided by grace; the other, passive, which is the gift of God. The latter is usually the reward of the former, after that has been faithfully practiced for some space of time."¹

Lallemant's teaching, according to Bremond, may be summed up in the following four steps. First, two conversions are necessary: the one being the step by which we give ourselves up to God, and the other the step by which we dedicate ourselves entirely to perfection. Second, we should seek for the attainment of a contemplative spiritual life rather than one of action. Third, purity of heart, wherein is located all the evils that beset us, should be our constant goal. Fourth, the Holy Spirit will give direct and personal guidance to all those who set out honestly on this road. It is to see that all of these are found in Grou and that he will fit well into this classification.

As to the first point, we have already shown in a former chapter that Grou experienced a second conversion when he "gave himself up completely to the will of God

and received the gift of prayer." "The conversion, therefore, of a man, is much less his own work than that of God. ... A voice is not ordinarily heard from heaven: this miraculous circumstance is not necessary. But God speaks to the interior of the heart: He presses us sometimes to read such a book of piety, sometimes to perform such a deed of charity, sometimes to go and hear the word of God, sometimes to consult a prudent friend. We feel ourselves inwardly pushed on, without well knowing for what. ... if we accept of the invitation, we are astonished to find ourselves changed, at the moment we thought of it the least."¹

On the second point, we find again that Grou was in full agreement. He is convinced that the ideal of Christian devotion is the contemplative life; that the matter of prayer is the most important thing in the christian's life. He tells us to look to Christ Himself and find that all he did outwardly was from divine leadership in the interior of His heart. "With this example before us (the example of Jesus Christ) how can we persist in deceiving ourselves, or fail to be convinced that the christian life, - which must inevitably mean the imitation of Jesus Christ, - is essentially a spiritual life? It was thus that all the saints under-

1. Morality from St. Augustine, pp. 224, 227.

stood it; and they were only saints in proportion to the spirituality of their lives. It was the Spirit within them who sanctified their fasts, vigils and austerities; they practiced these more or less according to the prompting of the Spirit of God. They never neglected the external practices of devotion, which for the most part were bequeathed to us by them; but most of all they gave their attention to the interior virtues, making them the soul of their actions."1 In another quotation we find Grou expressing the same idea. "All exterior good works, even when they have Jesus Christ Himself for their object, and when they have to do with such things as bodily nourishment, are in themselves of far less value than prayer and the repose of contemplation. Consequently we must, as a general rule, prefer prayer to exterior acts, and must give much more time to it. By prayer I mean here all those exercises of piety of which the soul is the immediate object. When exterior works of charity which have to do with our neighbor, are not of absolute necessity, we must not multiply them to such an extent that they take the place of our prayers and our spiritual exercises."2

On the third point, we find many passages in which Grou stresses purity of the heart as the ideal toward

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 431.
2. Manual for Interior Souls, p. 236.

which we should ~~strive~~. "The necessary condition for seeing God is to ^{be} pure with an infinite purity, of which no one, not even the greatest saints, can form any idea. It is to have a heart pure of all affection that is unrelated to the love of God. The whole of Christian perfection is comprised in that purity, and it is because purity of heart is always capable of growth that the perfection of a Christian has no limits."1 "Everything within us is opposed to our super-natural good; everything draws us towards the slavery of the senses and of self-love. We must struggle continually against ourselves, and wage a constant war against our own inclinations, either in resisting impressions from without or fighting with those from within."2 "It is not a slight thing to reform our character in such a manner that we only preserve what is good, and succeed in correcting what is defective. Even many Saints whom the Church venerates, have not been entirely dead to themselves in this matter. The great means to attain this, without too much study or constraint, is to watch carefully over the heart, to restrain its first motions, neither to act nor to speak through ill-humour or satire or impetuosity, and to keep ourselves always in peace and self-possession."3 "We

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 111
2. Manual for Interior Souls p. 17
3. Ibid p. 21

must annihilate ourselves in all that regards our heart, attaching ourselves to nothing except according to the will of God, appropriating nothing to ourselves, desiring nothing and fearing nothing. It is comparatively easy to detach ourselves from temporal goods, from human sympathies and natural affections; this does not cost us much, when once we have tasted the sweetness of God. But it is not so easy, it costs us a great deal, to be really detached from spiritual goods, to be indifferent about Divine consolations, to receive them with simplicity, to lose them without regret not to desire their return."¹

"If our heart be calm, if it be free from desire, and fear, and self-reproach, if we can look into its depths without shrinking, if in a word it be content with its present state, we may regard it as certain that it is in a state of order, through entire submission to the will of God; and further, that the existence of this submission ensures to it the possession of peace."² "We can therefore obtain peace and make it perfect in us by persistently mortifying our heart and keeping it dependent on grace."³ "The third means is to discover the obstacles that prevent God from reigning in us, and to rid our heart of them little by little."⁴

1. Manual for Interior Souls

2. School of Jesus Christ p. 187

3. Ibid p. 188

4. Ibid p. 161

Finally, as regards the fourth point, the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, we find again that Grou is in agreement with Lallemant. "As to persons in the passive state, there is no need to teach them any particular method for dwelling in the presence of God. The Holy Spirit leads them to the use of all due methods: they have only to yield themselves to His guidance."¹ "Then you must be silent and suspend the exercise of your faculties, and hold yourself calmly passive under the operation of the Holy Spirit."² "As to what regards our spiritual conduct, we must take care to receive simply from God just what He gives us, and to remain where He places us, without desiring anything else. ... Let us believe that God will give us, just in the right measure, whatever light is necessary for us, and let us not try to go beyond; but let us receive the spiritual light He does give us very humbly, and apply ourselves at once to put it in practice."³ "As a general rule, let us always try to keep our mind and heart empty and pure, that God may place there what He wishes and do with us what He pleases."⁴ "Generally speaking, the only thing we have to do is to surrender ourselves entirely to grace, and resolve to follow the spirit of God wherever

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 40
2. The School of Jesus Christ p. 253
3. Manual for Interior Souls • p. 22
4. Ibid p. 242

it may lead us."1

In this next passage we note references to all of the last three points: interior devotion, purity of heart and leadership of the Holy Spirit."If a man, in his sermons or books, or in the confessional, or in conversations or letter, alludes to mental prayer, mortification of heart, or obedience to divine inspirations; if he teaches the renunciation of self-guidance and surrender to the direction of the Holy Spirit; recollectedness and the practice of the presence of God; preference for spiritual rather than external exercises, and the habit of praying silently while the Master speaks to the heart; and if it should become known to the outside world that he teaches these practices and directs souls on these lines, it will be quite enough to bring a crowd of angry critics about him, all eager to condemn him, and accuse him of forsaking the usual roads for unknown paths."2

From these citations relative to the four points in the Lallemand school, we find that Grou is definitely a member of this group in his theology. At this point there is another feature of Grou's teaching that ought to be observed in this connection. This feature is his very evident agreement with de Caussade in his interpretation of "giving up to the will of God completely" or the

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 162
2. Ibid p. 371

doctrine of "Abandonment to Divine Providence", which he called his "Sacrament of the Present Moment."

The main idea here is that the soul trying to live the interior life should above all things receive what comes to it and act according to it at the present moment, recognizing it as the will of God. Naturally the soul will want to do God's will at all times and in all things but it is not by searching for it nor by special acts of resignation that this is accomplished best; but, rather by doing what the present directions, both from without and within, reveal as the will of God, here and now. The present moment is the only moment in the soul's control. The past and the future are out of its reach, therefore follow God or accept what he gives in this moment and in each succeeding moment.

Grou was evidently familiar with this teaching and adopted it as wise and effective. We see evidences of it in many passages. "Vigilance consists in paying even more attention to God than to ourselves, listening to His inspirations reverently and being always obedient to the promptings of grace. .. To yield to nature in nothing, and to follow all the movements of grace step by step."¹

"They are borne onward in the path of perfection as a child is carried in his mother's arms, but not until

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 342

they have voluntarily cast themselves into the arms of God, from whom they would not part for worlds. ... Now, he who rows, contributes to his progress by his own labor, and has a right to attribute it, in some part, to himself. But he who is carried on by the wind alone cannot doubt that he is wholly indebted to it; all he has to do is unfurl the sail, to catch the wind, and allow himself to be driven unresistingly."¹

"Does the liberty of the children of God extend any further? Yes, their liberty with regard to God consists in this: that, willing everything which God wills, without inclining to one side or the other, without any thought of their own interest, they have given their consent beforehand to all that can happen to them. In whatsoever state they are, they are perfectly content, .. and they take a pleasure in that state, so that they would not change it for any other, nor allow themselves to take any steps to go out of it."² "Entire resignation of self leaves to God the care of the future, and only occupies itself with the present moment."³ "My eternity depends always upon the present moment."⁴ "Even if a spiritual life had no other advantage than this, that it gives us a calm assurance that all our moments are employed according to the will of God, that alone is an inestimable

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 219

2. Manual for Interior Souls p. 44 f

3. Ibid p. 85

4. Ibid p. 90

advantage."1 "From the moment that the soul gives herself entirely to God, so long as she does not take back that gift, but remains in that state of simple dependence on God's will, never swerving from that dependence by any deliberate act, she participates, in the depths of her being, in the very being of God, because she is, every moment, just what He wishes her to be."2 "Activity multiplies practices of piety. ... Repose concentrates us in God, and fixes us on one thing only. ... to listen for the voice of God in prayer ... and, when we are not in prayer, to accomplish His divine will in the moment that is passing, without troubling ourselves about the past or the future, in such a manner that the soul never has but one single object in view, and that she is never drawn away by exterior things, being less occupied with what she is actually doing, than with the will of God, which is its motive and its end."3

"We cannot fulfill this obligation if we be not constantly dependent upon grace; if we voluntarily dwell on ideas that are either opposed or alien to the thoughts by which God wishes our minds to be occupied, moment by moment; or if we yield to affections that absorb a share, at the least, of our hearts and deprive God of a portion of them."4

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 93
2. Ibid p. 94
3. Ibid p. 406
4. The School of Jesus Christ p. 282

"When we have contributed nothing to bring about a certain event, either exterior or interior, we may be quite sure that this event or this disposition of soul is the will of God for us, and consequently that it is the very best thing for us to do at the present moment."¹

"This is the most important point in the spiritual life. As soon as the christian has devoted himself to his God he ceases to belong to himself; he has no longer any right to dispose of himself; he can have no will but the will of God, which is manifested in him from one moment to another, and requires at all times his unhesitating and uninterrupted submission."²

"In what soul does God act more freely, more efficaciously, and more independently, than in that which has constituted Him ruler of its faculties, keeping them continually submissive to His will, and only reserving for itself a constant attention to His guidance, and an exact fidelity in following it? if it persevere to the end in this disposition, is it not clear that God will raise it to that degree of holiness which He intends for it."³

All of these passages show us that Grou believed that the most important thing in religion, from the

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 217
2. Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. I, 65f.
3. Spiritual Maxims p. 231

standpoint of man, is to be resolved to follow the will of God in all things at the very moment that it is revealed; that is, that we must always do in this present moment what God shows us we are to do. We do not have to be searching for this all the time but we must always be of such an inward disposition that we accept from God whatever He sends without hesitation and with gladness moment by moment. When one has become thus submissive to God, he acts only in response to the leadings of the holy Spirit. His own action or will is suspended, except to constantly will what God wills and do it as it is revealed to him at the time it is revealed, that is, the present moment.

It would seem from this investigation that the school of Jesuit mystics which began or became distinct with Lallemant found its full expression or reached its maturity in Nicolas Grou. He has developed and made reasonable and practical much that his predecessors taught. He has shown clearly that asceticism and mysticism are rationally harmonious and complementary. He also advances a step farther than his forerunners when he sets forth his interpretation of prayer. In this he reduces the entire interior life largely to this one exercise. Mental prayer becomes the medium both of his asceticism and

his mysticism. We shall discuss this in detail in a later chapter.

We close this discussion with the observation that Grou's interest in theology was not speculative. He was interested in Truth for the blessing that the knowledge might bring to himself, for the glory that might be given to God and in order that the way to the richer life might be shown to others. It was through his asceticism, his mysticism and his exposition of prayer that he sought to do this. Thus we leave this chapter to examine his position in these three matters.

CHAPTER VI

THE ASCETICISM OF JEAN NICOLAS GROU

In any examination of the asceticism of Nicolas Grou we will first notice, that while the bulk of his writing is ascetical, he also understood and taught the mystic way. He makes no separation of these two elements in his teaching. In fact, he often mingles one with the other. It will be impossible, then, to discuss his ascetic views without bringing in from time to time the mystical element of his teaching also. This combination of the ascetic and the mystic is one of the things that will make Grou's writings live.

The foundation for Grou's ascetic views will be found in his doctrine of man, original sin and total depravity. A glimpse of these will show why he felt the practice of asceticism was a necessity.

Grou tells us that man was made in the image of God, an intelligent, spiritual being with free will. God purposed that man should glorify Him by giving to Him his love, and in turn God would give Himself to man as a reward. Man is a moral being with a spiritual life, a soul, which gives him a kinship to God that is not found in other creatures that God has created.

God's purpose in creating man is set forth in the following quotation. "But the property of goodness is self-communication. This infinite goodness has engaged God to create intelligent beings, in whom He has placed a ray of light that lifts them up to Himself. He would be loved by them because whosoever knows Him, cannot be dispensed from loving Him. He would have this love to be free, to be a love of choice and of preference; because He designed to give Himself as a reward to the creature, who from choice should love Him; and the reward supposes the merit, and the merit, the use of free will. Besides, it is only in a free love on our part that the glory of God, which is the end of all His works, can be found; and now He is glorified by the love of the blessed in heaven, only because it was free in its source. Thus a precept of loving God was indispensable. But this precept is all in our favour; for it is impossible that the happiness of an intelligent creature should be found in anything but in the love of God."¹

Man, in the free exercise of his love, is like God in whose image he is made. "It is Himself He (God) loves, when He loves His creatures. The heart of God, even when He diffuses Himself elsewhere, is therefore always collected within His unity. Man, in this respect, is made

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 6.

to the image and resemblance of God: not that he can be as God is, sufficient to himself; but in this sense, that all his affections should have a relation to God, and assume the character of unity, by their reunion in the unity of God. In loving creatures, and loving himself, he only should love God. His love should have no other centre, and whilst he takes into view divers other objects, he always should hold fast to this only object, as to his principle and as to his term. In this manner his affections spread themselves abroad like those of God, without dissipation, and he always remains collected in God, as God is always collected in Himself. But that which God is from the infinite excellency of his nature, man cannot be but from the good use of his will."¹

Grou also points out the kinship between our soul and God. "There is an essential analogy between the soul and God, who, notwithstanding the distance from finite to infinite, are two spiritual intelligent substances of which the one is evidently made to know and to love the other, and to taste in this knowledge and in this love a satisfaction, a joy, that is its felicity." ². "But the moral relations of our soul, either with God or ourselves, absolutely cause it to step out of the rank of the other creatures, and give it an elevation that is entirely

1. Morality from St. Augustine , p. 51.

2. Ibid, p. 235f.

peculiar to itself. It is made to the image of God, that is, it is capable of knowing, loving and possessing Him"¹.. God is the principle of the physical life of the soul as Creator. This cannot be doubted. The soul is not eternal: it began to exist; and therefore it was drawn out of nothing. ... Not only has God created the soul, but He preserves it, and continues its existence at every moment. So that it would return to nothing, if the Almighty hand which drew it from nothing, suspended, for an instant, the action that makes it exist. God therefore continually preserves the soul with all its operations, and its successive affections. ... This is not all: He concurs, as first and universal cause, in all its acts, and without this concurrence it could not produce any. Moreover, God is the efficient cause of all that is passive in it; or if other spirits act upon it, it is only by His will, or His permission."²

Thus God made man, this moral being with a kinship to God Himself, and endowed him with reason and understanding that he might know and love God and find happiness in this fellowship. "At our creation God bestowed on us reason and understanding, in order that we might know and love Him; He purposed that we should eternally enjoy this love and knowledge, and also that such enjoyment should be our reward; therefore it became necessary that it should be

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 279

2. Ibid p. 281.

deserved. To this end he placed us on earth for a certain space of time, known only to Himself. He gifted us with liberty; that is, with command over our actions, in order that, being performed by our own will, they might merit praise or blame, reward or punishment. Praise and reward are thus attached to the free fulfilment of the duties imposed on us by God; and blame and punishment follow the wilful violation of those duties."¹

"My soul, -- that substance which is by nature intelligent, free, spiritual, and immortal, -- my soul, made in the image of God, is derived altogether and entirely from Him. My parents contributed nothing to its existence: at the most they ignorantly determined the moment of its creation. My soul, then, has absolutely no father but God, to whom it owes its being, its properties, and its qualities. He made it what it is because He willed it, from pure goodness, having no need of it and being perfectly happy independently of it."²

Man was created sinless but he was created with the power to sin. Man was created free from sin with perfect liberty and order established in his nature. However, he was not essentially perfect in his nature because he was drawn from the void and because he was dependent on the Creator. The perfection of man would be the reward of the

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 13

2. The School of Jesus Christ p. 295

proper use of his liberty in the exercise of his free will. Man's dependence upon his Creator naturally necessitated obligations on the part of man to his Maker. By his free will man could use his liberty to fulfill these obligations or he could abuse his liberty and neglect to fulfill them. In the use of his free will then lies man's power to sin. Grou explains this rather carefully. "Liberty, in its abstract, hath no essential power of doing good or ill; else God, who possesses supreme liberty, would not be free, because He can never will, or do, evil. Therefore our power of doing wrong does not proceed from our liberty, but from two other causes. The first of these is, that being necessarily dependent on God by a moral dependence, our actions ought to follow the rule of His will; so that they are morally good if they conform to it, and morally bad if they do not. The second is, that being defective in our very nature, it is possible that our conduct may swerve from this rule. From these two causes, combined with the free will which simply makes us masters of our actions, arises that fatal power of sinning which it would be unjust and blasphemous to accuse God of having given us."¹

"The liberty that we see in man is also a perfection, and indeed the most excellent of those that he possesses.

God, who in this respect created man in His own image, gave him freedom in order that it might help him to become morally good, just, holy, and capable of the happiness that was destined to be his reward. Man's power to sin cannot be the offshoot and result of so excellent a gift, since the latter is derived from absolute purity and granted for a sublime object.

"Whence, then, does it come, since it is not naturally inherent in liberty? It comes from the fundamental imperfection of the creature. Man is drawn from the void, and for that reason his will is not essentially righteous and inclined to the good, as is the will of God: it is subject to weakness, and may turn towards the evil. Thence every intelligent and free creature, who necessarily has duties to perform towards his Creator, and who, in fulfilling them, becomes worthy of the end for which he is meant, is capable of neglecting those duties and failing to attain his end. This power in the creature is radical imperfection, and, far from priding himself upon it, he ought to lament it and abase himself on its account, and above all fear to use it, because it would be fatal to him.

"Therefore, as liberty is perfect in God because it is impossible for Him to make a bad use of it, so it is imperfect in the creature because, owing to a flaw inherent

in his nature, he is able to abuse it and make it a weapon against God and against himself.

"The exercise of the power to sin, then, is plainly not the same thing as the exercise of our liberty.

"It is true that if I were not free I could not sin, anymore than I could do right; but it is not precisely because I am free that I sin, but because I am fundamentally capable of sin. In the act itself this capacity or power to do wrong, which is really only a defect, infers the exercise of liberty, but is actually something different from it: it is the abuse of liberty, it is the application of liberty to an object to which it was not God's intention that I should apply it.

"I sin, then, because I am free to choose evil; but I am no less free when I am abstaining from sin. Indeed I am freer, in that I am using my freedom better, bringing it thereby nearer to the freedom of God, and making it serve the end for which He gave it to me."¹

Man was created, says Grou, with God at the center of his affections, thus in him there was the same order and unity that was in God Himself but of a finite and instead of an infinite nature. This order was disrupted by the refusal of man to use his liberty entirely for God. Man, lead on by his desire to be like God and by

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 135 f

the wiles of Satan, chose not to obey God in the fulfillment of the obligations which he as a creature owed to his Creator. Thus man's moral goodness was destroyed as he made himself the center of his affections rather than God.

In this next quotation Grou shows what man's moral goodness consists of. "But as God loves nothing but with a reference to Himself: and to say better, as it is Himself alone that He loves, in all that He does love; because the creature, being nothing of itself, has nothing that is amiable, but what God has placed in it: He will have man, who is made to His image, establish in his affections the same order which reigns in His own affections. And it is principally in that, in which we ought to resemble God: in that does our moral goodness consist."¹

"When Adam came from the hands of the Creator, his spirit was humble and subjected to God, and his body was docile and subjected to the spirit. So, all within him was in order, and he had only to keep it in the same state. Sin destroyed this order; Adam rebelled against God. His revolt arose from a principle of pride, and from a foolish hope of becoming like God if he ate the forbidden fruit. The rebellion of his flesh was destined

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 309f.

to humble his pride, and to make him feel that the man, who, abusing his reason, aspires to equality with God, deserves the punishment of being set on a level with beasts, and subjected, like them, to the empire of the senses."¹

Satan had his influence on Man to persuade him to disobey and rebel against God and he continues to exercise it among men today. "Satan desires our ruin. His reason for desiring it is that he is the opponent of God's glory, and is jealous of our happiness. Being himself created to glorify God perfectly he was dazzled by his own perfection, and rising in rebellion against God aspired to being equal with Him, and making himself independent. When the Almighty overthrew him and cast him into Hell he lost none of his pride, and thought only of revenge. That is his ruling aim. Being too weak to withstand God he attacks us, whose destiny it is to replace him and rebel angels in Heaven, and he strives unceasingly to rob us of the happiness he has lost. He began to tempt the human race in the persons of our first parents, and he would have caused the hopeless perdition of us all if God had not, even then, promised a Liberator in the person of his own Son."²

We notice that Grou says in the above passage that

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 125
2. The School of Jesus Christ p. 42

man was made by God to replace Satan and his rebelling angels in Heaven. This is another affirmation of the perfection which is man's destiny.

This fatal choice of man to disobey God was the cause of his fall and the change of his nature into a state of total depravity. Grou brings this out in several passages.

"Man therefore was created at first in this supernatural state, with all necessary knowledge, means, and succours. But by his fall he has put himself and his posterity in an absolute incapacity of rising again: he has fallen even below what he would have been in a state purely natural. By original sin alone the whole race of Adam is not only degraded, but justly condemned to an eternal pain."¹

"Man was created at first with an upright heart, and an enlightened mind. He was acquainted with order, and with moral good, and he liked it; but he liked it as a creature essentially imperfect and defective. The illicit desire entered his heart, and notwithstanding the lights of his mind, he consented to it; and this consent was punished by God, not by a total subtraction, but a considerable diminution of those lights."²

The following two citations deal with the deplorable depravity wrought in man by his fall. This total

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 249

2. Ibid, p. 45

depravity of his nature, Adam passed on to the race and it is born in each member of the human family as original sin.

"Let us glance for a moment at man in his original state and follow the progress of his degradation and wickedness.

"When he left the hands of God at the creation he was righteous; that is to say he was the friend of law and order, inclined to goodness and without any innate distaste for practising it; he had no tendency towards evil, and could only sin by the perfectly free and deliberate action of his will. His thoughts and affections turned naturally towards the Author of his being; his senses did not carry him away; his passions had no empire over him; he was master of his every impulse, and external objects had no power over him except with his consent. Such was his original state of rectitude.

"The enlightenment of his mind equalled the uprightness of his heart: he knew clearly, distinctly, and with certainty all the truths that it behoved him to know.

"Sin threw his whole nature into disorder. It obscured his intelligence, inclined his will towards evil, and thereby upset the balance of his freedom. It subjected him to the senses, causing their revolt to

affect him in spite of himself, and making their impressions so acute that he has the greatest difficulty in resisting them. It lit within him the fires of desire, which is the source of the passions; a flame which man is secretly inclined to foster and feed rather than quench. Above all it inspired in him the detestable quality of pride, which causes every form of submission and dependence to be hateful to him, makes him detest the law whose precepts and prohibitions interfere with his freedom, and inclines him to disobey his Creator and rebel against the duties God has strictly enjoined on him. It also produced in him unbridled self-love, which makes him regard everything in relation to himself, concentrate all his thoughts on self, and love nothing except for his own sake; thus turning himself into a sort of god, and assuming divine rights while completely disregarding the supreme love that he owes to God.

"Into this state of general disorder the introduction of sin threw human nature. Man cannot remedy the disorder by himself; he can only recognize it very imperfectly by the feeble light left to him, and it is only by the grace of God that he can see it clearly and repair it."¹

"Therefore, the first thing he perceived after his sin, was this rebellion of the flesh; it was the indubi-

table sign and witness of his degradation; and, had he not been blinded by sin, that disorder, which he was ashamed to look upon, would have taught him how much more disgraceful and odious was the rebellion of his spirit against God. God must needs open his eyes, and enable him to judge of the exceeding disorder of his spirit by the shame which he felt in consequence of the disorder of his flesh.

"We, miserable children of Adam, are all born with a fatal inclination to this twofold disorder. The flesh disobeys the spirit; its appetites and motions forestal the will; the will is ready, first, to consent, then to excite, and lastly to enslave itself to them. ... The disobedience of the spirit towards God goes, if possible, further still. .. This strange disposition, which every one will find in himself if he will look deep enough, arises from a prodigious pride which knows no master, a mad idea of our own excellence, and a blindness respecting self which induces idolatry."¹

Grou says that man is not essentially evil in his nature, but the evil is that which has been wrought by his failure to resist temptation and obey God. Man's refusal to deny himself for God brought a disruption of the order in himself and a guilt before God which God

alone can remove. Recognition of this sad state requires that man renounce himself or else he will renounce God and all that He offers for man's redemption.

"Our nature is not essentially evil, and the part of it which we are bidden to renounce is not the part that comes from God. But man is no longer what he was when he left the Creator's hands: sin has vitiated his whole being and all his faculties. Even in his state of innocence he was capable of wrongdoing in fact of temptation, as was proved by events: the faithful obedience due to his Creator demanded resistance, and the practice of renunciation. For, after all, his guilt consisted in yielding to that inexplicable possibility of evil which is inherent in every created being, and thereby giving an opening to the tempter's suggestion. He was arrogant, and thought to become equal with God: he was curious, and hankered after the knowledge of good and evil, which was forbidden to him; he reasoned about God's prohibition, as though it were caused by jealousy and the fear lest man should become altogether like Him; he looked at the forbidden fruit too readily, and allowed himself to be tempted by its beauty and lusciousness; in short he listened to the devil and listened to himself, when he should only have listened to God. In all these respects

he should have denied himself, and then he would not have sinned.

"But since his fall man has been sick in every part of his nature, and in order to be cured and kept in health, not by himself but by grace, he is called upon to practise renunciation on a very different scale. His mind is dull and clouded, so that false ideas and unsound arguments are constantly leading him astray: it behoves him, therefore, always to mistrust his boasted intellect, to give up depending on it, and to depend only on the light that comes from God, for which he should humbly pray. His will turns with aversion from what is good, and inclines to evil: he must overcome the aversion and fight the inclination: he must hate, and beat down, and destroy these two enemies in himself, not by his own strength, which would not avail him, but by the strength that grace bestows, that is to say the divine magnetism which attracts him to the good and withdraws him from the evil.

"It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that he should renounce himself, unless he desires to renounce God, his origin and goal, and to renounce, too, his glorious destiny, his happiness in the present life, and his nature as a rational being."¹

God, having seen before the sad plight into which man would fall, planned his redemption from eternal guilt by sending the Son as the Savior."At last the Saviour, who was promised from the beginning of the world, came upon the earth. The Son of God united Himself to our human nature: He has exalted it, He has adopted it, and deified it in some manner by this union. We are become His brethren, and children of God; the right of the heavenly inheritance is restored to us as Jesus Christ, a voluntary victim for our sins, reconciles us by His blood."¹

"He should necessarily be incarnate, to endure the humiliations and penalties due to man; and he should equally be God, to communicate to those humiliations and penalties as a value adequate to, or rather infinitely surpassing, the extent of the debt due by earth to heaven.

"Sin is so great an evil that, had not a Man-God undertaken to expiate it, the insult offered to the Deity by its commission would have subsisted forever; and all the united sufferings of the whole human race for eternity would have been inadequate to atone for its malice."²

"The human race, though endowed with so many gifts and destined for such bliss, failed in their duty at the very beginning of their existence. The first man and

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 250

2. The Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. I, p. 19

woman rebelled against their Creator and Father, and through the most insane pride disobeyed His commands in the hope that their transgression would make them His equals. They and all their race were thereby for ever deprived of the privileges of their condition. They deserved from that moment nothing but God's everlasting hatred and punishment. They had no hope but in His mercy. But He had foreseen the evil and prepared the remedy for it, --a remedy such as no father except God could ever be expected to supply. He who is in Himself eternally fecund possessed an only Son, equal to Himself; and He dedicated Him to the salvation of mankind. He sent Him to the earth, invested Him with our guilty and degraded nature, and by a decree fixed from all eternity, ordained that in that nature His Son should be humiliated, should suffer, and should die for us, and thus expiate as a willing victim the first sin and all the other sins that arose from it."1

The union of the divine and human natures in Christ made Him a perfect oblation before the perfection of God to give to God the perfect glory due to Him.

"His soul was the most perfect substance that ever came from the hands of God. At the very instant of its creation it was immediately and irrevocably united to the

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 297

person of the Word, and that unique favour, --the greatest that God was able to confer on any created substance, --carried with it the fulness of all gifts and all graces. And the same union with His flesh raised it above the most sublime of intelligent beings, and endowed it with purity and dignity. Jesus Christ was holy with the holiness of God Himself; He was absolutely incapable of sin both in soul and body. He possessed in the highest degree, or rather beyond all degrees and all measures, every perfection and every virtue."¹

In another passage, Grou explains again, the necessity of an Incarnate person to expiate the penalty of sin. "We can now conceive one of the principal reasons for the union of the Divine and human natures in Jesus Christ. It imparted to His soul the supernatural fortitude which sustained him under the desolation of that awful hour, and it rendered him capable of unparalleled love which dictated his inspiring act of entire abandonment to the will of Heaven. No mere creature, however perfect and exalted, not even the blessed Mother of God herself, could have supported so overwhelming a burden; the grace of the hypostatical union alone could render it endurable, and any other than a Man-God must have been annihilated by the force of the deluge of sorrow. ...It is evident that by accepting and enduring unto death that one torment

alone Jesus Christ fully satisfied the justice of God, for it could not demand, nor could he offer a nobler sacrifice."¹

God, on His part, has furnished man with a Savior. The perfect oblation for sin has been made and the atonement is sufficient for all the sins of the race. But man still must co-operate with God in the seeking of his salvation and his perfection in holiness. In order to claim the salvation which the Savior offers he must turn to Him and renounce self. Self-love, and the evils consequent to its rule must be driven from the heart. To reach a state of Christian perfection, this must not only be willed by man, but it must become an actual state in Him.

In this necessity of renouncing self, our evil nature and our own will to the will of God arises the need for the practice of asceticism. By it man co-operates with God in bringing his rebellious nature into submission to the will of God. Thus the practice of asceticism becomes the means by which man seeks to reach a high degree of perfection in his spiritual life.

Ascetic practice, as Grou sees it, should be largely an interior matter for it is in the depths of the heart that the desires, motives, dispositions and will are

1. The Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. II, p. 89

found. Outward acts are but the result of interior dispositions, therefore, if the interior dispositions in the soul are right, the right outward expression will be the natural result. "Sin, properly speaking, is an act of the will and the resolve to commit it is what constitutes its wickedness. The external act by itself, apart from the evil intention, is a purely physical matter with no moral significance. If it adds a certain amount of evil to the design formed in the heart, it is because action involves a more determined and persevering movement of the will, which is exercised in devising means of execution; in using them, when found, without regard to the consequences; and in overriding all the obstacles, both divine and human, which ought to bar the way."¹

"But for these exterior practices Jesus Christ has substituted interior ones, which are incomparably more difficult and painful. 'He came not,' He said, 'to bring peace, but a sword.' He puts this sword in the hands of His servants, and He wishes that they should make use of it against themselves, in that circumcision of the heart which mortifies without pity all the inclinations of corrupt nature, even to finally putting it to death, and leaving in the heart, thus mortified, no

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 130

single trace of the old Adam."¹

Pride and self-love are the root evils in the recesses of the heart and soul. Self-love is the enemy of the love of God. To refer all things to God and set Him above everything is to have the love of God, but to refer all things to self as the center is to be filled with self-love. "These two loves are entirely contrary to one another; not only rivals but enemies, disputing the possession of the same heart. No compact can exist between them. They hate, attack, and persecute each other to the death. The perfect extinction of self-love, either in this world or the next, opens heaven for us, and ensures our blessedness. The extinction of the love of God, when we pass out of this life, sinks us into hell, and constitutes our eternal misery.

"So soon as a Christian really gives himself to God and to His service, divine love takes possession of his heart, sets up its throne within it, and forthwith proceeds to drive out self-love. Then self-love endeavours to maintain itself intact; if driven from one quarter it takes refuge in another; and so retreats from hold to hold, till it hides in the inmost recesses of the soul. This is its last refuge, and it is very difficult to tear it thence. There is no device by which it

does not endeavour to injure and weaken the enemy, and to lessen, if it cannot prevent, its victory. It is always dangerous, even after defeat; and often, when we think it crushed to the earth, it arises more formidable than ever.

"Such is the enemy, which we have to fight with the aid of grace."¹

We see from this that the renunciation of self in the interior of the heart and thereby bringing the self into subjection to the love of God is the aim of ascetism. Reason, taught and guided by religion, ought to regulate and bring into subjection to the will of God all those thoughts, affections, impulses and appetites which are subject to free will.

"How far should a man carry renunciation? As far as is necessary for the perfect fulfilment of the law of God; for a Christian there can be no doubt on that point. Now the law of God cannot be perfectly observed unless renunciation be universal, absolute, and continuous.

"If it be not universal, if you do not hate and wage war against everything vicious that exists in your nature, you cannot answer for yourself; you cannot tell what trap you will be thrown into through your self-indulgence on one point.

"The same danger arises when the renunciation is not absolute, but is subjected to conditions, restrictions, and reservations. Nature will always win the day if you once begin to argue with her about questions of degree, and allow her to state her reasons. 'It is nothing,' she will tell you; 'nothing will come of it. I shall go no farther.' Do not depend on her, or rather, be quite certain that she cannot be believed.

"Renunciation ought to be continuous, that is to say there is no moment in life when you should not be on your guard, to resist the first promptings of nature. Nature is always ready to take action against grace, and you must always oppose her with action of greater force, for it is folly to hope that you can get the better of her in a state of equilibrium. The moment that your efforts grow weaker or your vigilance relaxes you will fall." 1

There are three phases to the practice of asceticism according to Grou. The first is mortification by which man, with the help of God, actively seeks to destroy the evils he finds in himself. The second is active engagement of man, again aided by grace, in the practice of virtues which will root out the evil dispositions in himself. The third is the submission of the self to the cleansing action of God by yielding without resistance

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 86 f

to what he sends to the soul to purify it. All three are necessary to sanctification.

"Sanctity is begun by our own efforts, sustained and assisted by Divine grace: it is finished and perfected solely by the Divine operation. Man raises the edifice as high as he can, but because there is a great deal that is human in this edifice, God destroys all the work of man, and substitutes for it His own work; and the creature has nothing else to do but to allow the Creator to act as He pleases."¹

Let us bear in mind that these are phases of the same thing and all may be in progress at the same time, in fact they should be.

There are three primary areas of interior mortification as Grou outlines it. The mortification of the passions, of the understanding and of the will.

As to the mortification of the passions, which are the quick motions of the soul, they are guided by a blinded will since the fall of man. "Therefore they misapprehend their object; they pursue it ardently, and because its falsity renders it unsatisfying, their craving increases more and more: ever disappointed, they ever seek a still eluding happiness. Except it be enlightened by the beams of grace, the soul continues in its state

of delusion until death puts an end to all deception.

"Thus the primary duty of a Christian is to deprive the passions of food, to check their impetuosity, quench their fire, and prevent their first emotions. To this end he must bring under control the senses which point out the object of passion, he must bridle the imagination which depicts it in seductive colours, and kindles desire, and he must curb every inordinate inclination."1

The mortification of the understanding is necessary, for this is the realm of our pride and prejudices. These exist in human nature regarding birth, pleasures, comforts, riches, customs, demeanor, deference, honor, rank, etc. "The destruction of these prejudices is not sufficient; their root dwells within ourselves, and we must turn our attention to that quarter; into that stronghold mortification must carry fire and sword."2

The mortification of the will is most necessary for it is the controlling element of the soul. "Against your will the heaviest blows must be dealt: this is the dominant faculty of the soul, and the most corrupt, for in it sin takes its rise and attains to perfection. The understanding is often enlightened and convinced while the will resists and refuses to surrender. Attack it then, and determine on curbing its indocility."3

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 129 f
2. Ibid p. 133
3. Ibid p. 134

"The will must die to its own likes and dislikes, must resist its inclinations and do violence to its aversions."¹

"Its life, motion, and activity must only exist for the glory and the good pleasure of God."²

Grou mentions a fourth mortification also which he calls the mortification of the depths of the soul. This is that which is associated with Entire Abandonment when the whole self is utterly annihilated and resigned into the hands of God. We shall examine this in our discussion of mysticism.

The practice of asceticism is not in mortification only, as we have said. There is the positive side in which dispositions of virtue are cultivated, as far as man can by the help of grace, in order to take the place of those we seek to destroy and thereby eliminate them. In this connection Grou discusses the practice of the love of God, the practice of the love of our neighbor, the practice of the presence of God, the observance of the Sacraments, the practice of humility, etc. However, he reduces the whole matter largely to the practice of the love of God.

"The practice of the love of God, when we examine it, is found to embrace nearly all the Christian virtues,

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 134
2. Ibid p. 134

since, under different names, they are nothing but the exercise of that love in different directions.

"Love or charity is a gift from God; we begin to possess it when God puts the desire into our hearts; this desire is, as it were, the first spark; for it is for us to convert it by our co-operation into a fire that shall flame within us."¹

The love of God grows by exercise, thus pious exercises, good works and the Sacraments should be used often.

The practice of the love of God needs solitude. "Even profane love seeks solitude and silence in its intercourse with the beloved object, and this is far more true of divine love, the most intimate of all loves.

"God, who is always present in the heart that loves Him, prompts it to hold aloof as much as possible from human intercourse, to escape from all other kinds of business at certain times, to concentrate entirely upon Him and enjoy in silence the most exquisite of all forms of intercourse, in the very centre of its being. This is the holy practice of the presence of God and of mental prayer, which is both the cause and the effect of love. If you love God with your inmost soul He will always be present with you, you will have no desire but to be alone

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 61

with Him, and you will avoid the worldly business and the men that keep you from His presence. Then you will only lend yourself to external matters as much as God requires; you will never devote yourself to them, for you will have an inward occupation which you prefer to all others."1

As the former quotation indicates, the practice of the love of God requires mental prayer. "Never neglect prayer, which is the chief food of love. If you deprive love of its nourishment, it will grow weaker and weaker and at last it will die."2

The love of God also grows by sacrifices and on all the misfortunes and humiliations that help to destroy pride. Thus we should delight in sacrifice and accept the things that abase pride as blessings.

The third phase of asceticism, we have said, is the yielding of the soul to the purifying action of grace. Man is unable to completely purify himself of self-love, only the special grace of God can do that. Thus when grace begins to lead, man should follow. Perhaps God will lead him into the passive way. "We enter the passive way, when we feel ourselves drawn by a strong and sweet working of grace, which, in order to gain space for its action, leads us to suspend our own; when

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 64 f
2. Meditations on the Love of God

we are inwardly moved to yield up our heart and liberty and natural self-government completely and irrevocably into the hands of God. Thus God takes possession of the powers of the soul; acts upon them, and makes them act as He will; and man only follows, though yet freely, in the path marked out for him. He holds himself prepared to do at any moment what God may require of him; and God, by secret inspiration, does cause him to know what He requires.

"All exercise of natural liberty with regard to interior things (for of such only am I speaking) consists in seconding, and in never forestalling, Divine motions. As soon as they are resisted, or forestalled, the human spirit is plainly at work; but in the state of which we speak the Christian lies under the hand of God, like an instrument on which and by means of which He works."¹

Grou sums up the whole matter of asceticism in the following citation. "To combat and, if possible, to destroy the pride and sensuality of human nature is the great end of the spiritual life, which inspiring the practice of recollection and attention to the divine Presence, and thereby concentrating the soul within herself, annihilates the life of the senses on the one hand, and on the other humbles the spirit by subjecting

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 17

its faculties to that obscure species of prayer which seems to be a state of idleness and inactivity, because divested of all effort of the imagination, memory and understanding, and unaccompanied by any perceptible act of the will."¹

We see in the last two passages definite mystic elements but Grou does not distinguish them and they are necessary to complete the picture. We will wait for the next chapter to examine his mysticism.

What is the result of all this habitual renunciation, this practice of interior asceticism? Grou expresses it rather fully in the following passage as he gives a glowing description of the fruits. "Order will reign in our souls; reason will be subject to God, the passions to reason, and the senses and the flesh to the spirit. We shall gradually attain to the perfect liberty of the children of God; we shall have absolute mastery over ourselves, with strength to arrest each unruly impulse at its birth, and to resist the first suggestions of the devil. We shall also have the incomparable advantage of no longer sinning gravely, nor of set purpose; but only thoughtlessly, by inadvertence, or surprise or sheer weakness, so that our faults will have no disastrous results and will simply serve to keep us humble and

1. Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. I p. 68

mistrustful of ourselves. We shall enjoy a well-founded and constant sense of peace; for as we progress in the practice of renunciation our battles become less frequent, shorter, and less fierce, and at last we can win victories almost without an effort.

"The presence of God, facility in prayer, and the love of spiritual things will be added to us together with this peace. The more we give up for God's sake the more He gives Himself to us, because He finds greater purity in our hearts.

"As for our neighbour, it is renunciation that will win us his respect and affection: the more we become dead to ourselves, and the less sensitive we are to the trials we endure at the hands of others, the more agreeable are our relations with everyone.

"With regard to the inevitable evils of life, of whatever kind, renunciation raises us above them, and teaches us to turn them into blessings.

"These are the advantages that we shall gain even in this world. But in eternity our reward will be great indeed!"¹

CHAPTER VII

THE MYSTICISM OF JEAN NICOLAS GROU

When we come to examine the mystical element in Grou's writings, we must again bear in mind that the large part of his teaching is ascetical and that he makes no distinction between the two. His primary effort was to lead men on the road toward Christian perfection. In this he joins the ascetical and mystical elements into one message thus making his mysticism the complement of his ascetic practices.

What then is the mysticism that we would examine in Nicolas Grou? "Many attempts have been made to define mysticism. As I understand mysticism it is a doctrine which holds that it is possible for the human soul to have direct access to divinity. Mysticism rests on the assumption of the possibility of a direct and immediate communion with God, without the intervention of any intermediate agency. It is the sense of the 'immediate presence' of the Divine to the soul of the experient; in other words, the presence of a Reality whose being is not mediated by either sense perception or rational inference."¹

William James ² "said that mystical experiences

1. Joseph A. Leighton: The Field of Philosophy, New York 1924 p. 151
2. William James: Varieties of Religious Experience, New York, 1915

bear four distinctive marks. (a) They are ineffable. They must be directly experienced; they cannot be imparted to others in any convincing manner. In this respect mysticism is like the feelings. There is no way to warm up to them save by having the experience. (b) Mystical states have also a noetic quality. The saint gets knowledge; he dips into 'states of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain, and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for aftertime.' (c) Mystical states are transient. Consciousness is enriched, the flower blooms; then it fades away. (d) Mystical states are absorbing. The state immerses the individual. The mystic 'feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed as if he were grasped and held by a superior power.'¹ We will find that all of these elements exist in Grou's teachings.

The foundation of his mystic teaching is his position that all true knowledge comes as the work of the Holy Spirit. There can be no understanding of truth, nor can any real virtue be attained except by the work of God's grace in the mind and soul.

1. Coleman R. Griffith: General Introduction to Psychology New York, 1928 p. 327 f

"It is also certain that God, as the only light of the mind, enlightens the eye of the soul, and puts it in a condition of discerning those objects which belong to the understanding. It is equally certain that in God, as the infinite truth, the soul perceives all simple, eternal, and immutable ideas. For where could the soul see those ideas, but where God see them? ".1.,.

"All truth proceeds from God, who is the eternal and infinite truth that formally includes all that is, and all that can be. God is also the master who teaches all truth, being the light that discovers it to the eyes of our soul"2

This true knowledge that is revealed to man by the action of God's spirit and grace is of two kinds. One, which Grou calls luminous, belongs to the mind; the other has to do with the heart and is in the realm of the feelings, it goes deep where the will is and binds it to God. "But besides this knowledge, which may be called luminous, because it belongs to the mind, there is another which consists in feeling alone, and is the portion of the heart. This is something sweeter, stronger and deeper. It is a certain sense given by God of Himself and of His presence. He seems to say to the soul: Taste and see how gracious the Lord is. The

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 281

2. Ibid p. 156

advantage of this knowledge beyond the other is that it binds the will to God much more strongly. Here the soul acts not at all; God acts within it and sets it aglow with a spark of His bliss."¹

Grou would tell us then that true knowledge is given only to those who are submitted to God; those who respond to the call of grace and give themselves to Him. Thus the greatest intellects fail with their reason to find true knowledge, because God will not reveal it to them, since they are not yielded to Him.

"All the truths of religion, both those that concern belief and those that relate to conduct, are absolutely inaccessible to flesh and blood: far from favouring the senses and passions in any way they tend only to weaken and destroy them. Nor are they, either, within reach of the unaided reason, however keen it may be."²

The mystic way is, naturally, the interior way. "The spiritual life is nothing else than a sort of commerce, an exchange between God and the soul. God gives that He may receive, and receives that He may give: so it is with the soul. God gives first; and He also gives last. He presents the soul with His grace, in time; He gives the soul His glory for ever, in eternity. This

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 5

2. The School of Jesus Christ p. 436

grace and this glory are a direct communication, more or less perfect, from God Himself."1

Grou felt that all real Christians must of necessity live an interior life. "I maintain that a Christian cannot worthily do honour to God, cannot fulfil, as he should the great commandment to love God, without living the interior life, and striving every moment of his existence to live it more and more perfectly. The interior life is a career that has no end. However great the progress already made, there is always an immense amount of ground still to be covered."2

It is in the interior of the soul that man has his intercourse with God. Thus the interior or mystic life must be a life of prayer. "Prayer is the chief source from which this light must come; for by prayer we immediately communicate with God: and it is impossible to come from it without a greater knowledge of ourselves." 3

When the interior dispositions are of the soul submitted to God, the deep secrets of the gospel that are withheld from the reason and the understanding are revealed directly to the mind and soul by the action of the Holy Spirit. "When this Spirit takes possession of a heart the deep secrets of the Gospel are revealed to it in mental prayer by marvellous methods. The knowledge is

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 69
2. The School of Jesus Christ p. 433 f
3. Morality from St. Augustine p. 288

conveyed, not by means of connected lessons, nor in definite words, but in a manner that is really indescribable. It is by the dark mysteries of faith that the Spirit enlightens; it is by silence that He speaks. The soul sees nothing and hears nothing; yet finds herself to have been taught far better than by years of study.

"Thus the Apostles, who had hitherto been quite ignorant of the mysteries of God, received the full knowledge of them at the moment of the Holy Spirit's descent upon them. And thus Paul, the persecutor, was suddenly inundated by the divine light, as it were, and in one instant learnt the whole scheme of the Faith. The results that God produced suddenly in the Apostles by a great miracle He produces slowly and by successive steps in those who practise prayer, according to His designs for them. They are no more justified in attributing anything to their own efforts than the Apostles would have been.

"You will say: What is the use of talking to me in this way about mental prayer? It is not in my own power to practise it; it is the gift of God. -- True: but it is in your power to acquire the right disposition. Faithfully follow the leading of the grace you have, and then, if this gift be not granted to you, you will have no cause for self-reproach."¹

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 425 f

Care must be taken not to listen to the leanings of reason. "Thus if we would know for certain the truth concerning any object whatever, we must lean to neither side; we must hold ourselves in a most perfect indifference. I own that this is difficult to a soul that is full of desires, of aversions, fears, hopes, projects and imaginations. It is, however, what we must aim at, in order to steer clear of every kind of illusion and deceit."¹

The very beginning of the interior life is brought about by the leadership of the Holy Spirit working in the heart and mind. "It is the visit of God's Holy Spirit which disposes the soul for the interior life. She is unable to understand its meaning until his light reveals it, and more incapable still of esteeming its value, or desiring a share in its treasures, until his grace has inspired those sentiments. What is the interior life? A life based on the doctrine and example of Jesus Christ. That doctrine and example are wholly supernatural. The maxims of Christ are incomprehensible until the spirit of God deigns to develop their meaning; his examples are powerless to influence the conduct or touch the heart until the same divine spirit imparts to human weakness the aid of a special grace. This fact is exemplified in the history of the apostles.

1. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 294

"No sooner had the light of truth shed its brightness on those early Christians, -- they at once embraced it with their whole soul; -- they were ready to sacrifice at its shrine wealth, relatives, honor and life. In these sentiments it was that they became Christians and received the Holy Ghost. ...

"When God destines a soul for the interior life he usually prepares her for his designs by imparting certain lights, and suggesting certain reflections of which she does not at first comprehend the object. She is struck by a book she chances to meet; by a conversation she hears; by an example she witnesses; as yet there is nothing very marked or definite in the impressions they produce. At last the decisive moment comes; the light of heaven beams on her and reveals the perfection to which she is called; the road leading to it opens on her view; the sweet attractions of divine grace beckon her on; a holy ardor to which she has hitherto been a stranger impels her forward; all that she has previously heard, read, and felt recurs to her mind, and in an instant the designs of God are made manifest." 1

Grou presents the mystic way as having three degrees. They are the active way, the ordinary passive way and the extraordinary passive way.

1. Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. II, p. 104, Vol. I p.91f

The active way is that in which the soul uses all of its faculties, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to walk with God. Following this way, "a Christian makes due use of the faculties bestowed on him by God - of memory, understanding and will; he exercises them himself. Although directed by grace, and fully intending to follow its direction, he yet preserves his own liberty, and considers, judges, chooses, concerning all things pertaining to his salvation. He meditates on the truths of the gospel; by effort of his will he acquires love of them, he applies them to himself and makes them the rule of his conduct."¹

The ordinary passive way is only entered by the leadership of God's grace. In it the action of the soul consists only in seconding the action of God and is otherwise passive. "All exercise of natural liberty with regard to interior things (for of such only am I speaking) consists in seconding, and in never forestalling, Divine motions. As soon as they are resisted, or forestalled, the human spirit is plainly at work; but in the state of which we speak the Christian lies under the hand of God, like an instrument on which and by means of which He works."²

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 16
2. Spiritual Maxims p. 17

After a soul has walked for a while in the passive way, it begins to lose its sense of pleasure that she formerly found in her intercourse with God. This removal of the sensible pleasure is the work of God in order to get the soul to detach itself from these things in itself. God's Spirit is leading in it, and if the soul perseveres in following the leading of grace, a detachment from these pleasures that is pleasing to God and beneficial to the perfection of the soul will be accomplished. This is called the state of bare faith. "Thus a spirit of detachment will gradually be formed in your minds, and you will be prepared to accept, without terror or danger, the time of weaning from sensible sweetness, when God is about to give you more solid nourishment in the exercise of bare faith.

"By bare faith, I mean that state in which we serve God without any pledge or assurance of acceptance. This state is extremely painful to self-love; and so it must be, because it is intended to undermine it imperceptibly, and at last to destroy it as far as is possible in this life. If we entered suddenly and unpreparedly on a state so crucifying to nature, we should soon be repelled and give up all idea of leading an interior life. Therefore God with infinite wisdom provides for the difficulties of

the advance: He does not wean the soul until it has attained a certain growth, and although He may afterwards keep it in a habitual state of privation, He yet tempers its rigour by frequent tokens of His love. The soul, on its side, long remembers the first graces bestowed on it by God, and this remembrance serves as a support in times of destitution. Besides, this state of bare faith has its degrees, the last of which is not reached till after the lapse of many years.

"Therefore it is important, that those who are called by God to an interior life, should know that bare faith is, strictly speaking, the essence of that life; the pleasant state in which they are first placed, is only the prelude and preparation for it. This bare faith glorifies God most, because He is hereby served in a manner worthy of Himself, which yields no pleasure to self-love, and wherein we in no wise seek ourselves, but practise self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice, and give ourselves over to bear all such rigour as it shall please a merciful justice to exercise upon us."¹

Unfortunately, many are overcome by the difficulties they experience in the interior of their hearts and are never able to reach this state of bare faith. However, those who follow God regardless of compensations

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 147, 148, 149

are in it, usually without realizing it until the state has held them for a long time. This state is essential to the last degree of the mystic way which we define below.

The extraordinary passive way is the degree of the mystic way in which visions, ecstasies and revelations are received. "The extraordinary way, which is very rare, is that in which are found ecstasies, revelations, visions, and other like favours; and in which the devil troubles body and mind with vexatious and divers torments."¹

This last degree is the way in which occurs the mystical death and the mystical resurrection. Death to self must be complete as far as the soul is concerned. The action of the Holy Spirit comes in the heart like a two-edged sword and destroys the self completely, with the consent of the soul, which is completely abandoned to God. This is the mystical death.

"In a moment God despoils her of all; not in reality, but in appearance, and reduces her to an entire poverty and nakedness; she sees in herself neither gifts nor virtues, nor anything supernatural. She knows neither what she is, nor what she has been, nor what she will become. Her sins, her nothingness, her reprobation:

this is all she sees in herself, and of which she counts herself worthy. This is the end and consummation of the mystical death in Jesus Christ."1

"God alone, by an extraordinary grace, can bring a soul into this state, and lead her by the hand to the end of it."2

God also raises up to new life in Christ the soul that he has lead through mystical death. This is the blessed state of the mystical resurrection which is a very high degree of perfection, even in this life.

"But when they have expired in this mystical death, the moment comes on of their glorious resurrection. The union with Jesus Christ their spouse is consummated. The favours bestowed on them are no longer of short duration after which, as St. Augustine complains, the painful weight of nature is felt. It is a permanent state: it is a lasting peace, that surpasses all sentiment; it is a sweet and tranquil delight, that nourishes and satiates the soul: it is a continual rapture in God, which nevertheless leaves it to all its reflection, and to the full possession of itself; it is an anticipated paradise: and if it still suffers, it suffers with a joy which surpasses even all other supernatural joys."3

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 24 f

2. Ibid p. 401

3. Morality from St. Augustine, p. 325

We conclude this chapter with the observation that Grou has told us that mental prayer is the medium for the spiritual intercourse that goes on in the mystic way between God and the soul. Therefore in the next chapter we shall attempt to set forth his exposition of prayer.

CHAPTER VIII
GROU'S EXPOSITION OF PRAYER

When we consider prayer as Nicolas Grou taught it, we must bear in mind that he believed that mental prayer is the medium through which the practice of interior asceticism and intercourse with God of the mystic way are carried on. The spiritual life is a life of interior fellowship with God. This fellowship of love can become a reality only by means of prayer that reaches to the very depths of the heart.

Prayer, therefore, in Grou's opinion, was a matter of greatest importance to every Christian. He was convinced that there are few who know how to pray. "They know a few forms of prayer from memory; they find in books as many others as they wish, but here they stop. When they have read these or recited them from memory, they imagine that there is nothing more -- they do not know how to pray and do not as a rule pray at all."¹

It is necessary in the very beginning that a Christian realize that prayer is a supernatural act. "We know, generally speaking, that prayer is a religious act, but we easily forget when we are about to pray that it is a supernatural act, which is therefore beyond our strength, and can only be worthily performed by the inspiration and help of grace."² When the apostles came to Jesus Christ

1. The School of Jesus Christ, p. 229

2. Ibid

asking that He teach them how to pray, "It was the Holy Spirit who inspired them to make this request, and - gave them a most exalted idea of prayer." They were made "conscious of their own nothingness and of God's greatness" and of their inability to approach God unaided. Every prayer should begin with an inward admission of our insufficiency to pray aright and this attitude of mind should prevail throughout. " It remains an incontestable truth, that God begins everything in us, and this ought to be so, since He is always and in every case the source of all good." 1 Grou believed that the very impulse to pray that arises in the human heart is the work of the Holy Spirit. If man will yield to this divine direction, he will recognize his ignorance and emptiness. He will realize that as Paul says in II Corinthians 3:5 "we are not sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God." He will then turn imploringly to Him, asking to be taught how to pray. Man requires teaching from God "with regard to the nature of prayer, the object of prayer, the characteristics of prayer, the dispositions requisite for prayer and the right application of prayer to our personal needs. That is to say we are as ignorant of the theory as we are of its practice."2

Grou divides prayer into three kinds, namely: vocal prayer, active mental prayer and passive mental prayer.

1. Manual for Interior Souls

2. The School of Jesus Christ, p. 229

Vocal prayer is that prayer which is expressed through the lips and with the voice. The ideas contained are put into words and expressed audibly. However, real vocal prayer is but an outward expression of mental prayer. Children and beginners are capable of vocal prayer only.

The great danger in the use of vocal prayer is that it will be characterized too much by external devotion. To be effective, vocal prayer like mental prayer, must come from the heart. Grou feels that many of those who are given much to vocal prayer are guided by selfish motives and external interests. "Long vocal prayers seem to be characteristic of those whose devotion is only external. Jesus Christ makes them the subject of a special rebuke to the Pharisees, accusing them of deceiving widows by this apparent act of piety, and therefore obtaining money from them.

"God forbid that I should impute such motives to all who recite long prayers. But, with the exception of the simple, earnest souls who pray thus because they have never been taught to pray otherwise, I think such prayers are generally accompanied by a great deal of self-love. Wherever the slightest degree of affectation appears there is reason to suspect the presence of conceited or self-seeking motives."1

Grou points out that there is a definite place for vocal prayer both for the individual and for public use.

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 268

But it is his conviction that the individual should strive for mental prayer in his private and personal devotion.

"Vocal **prayer** is public prayer," according to Grou, and he explains why the church uses vocal prayer only. "It is because the liturgy of the Church is a public office, and even the priests who recite the breviary in private do so in the name and for the sake of the Church; because the Sacrifice of the Altar is offered by the minister in common with the faithful who are present, and who are supposed to join in the prayers of the celebrant and answer Amen, as is still done at choral Masses; and lastly it is because all the sacraments are administered according to a formula prescribed by the canons, and no minister is permitted to make any change in it." 1 It must be borne in mind that when Grou refers to the Church he is referring to the Roman Catholic Church.

Grou recommended the regular use of vocal prayer by all Christians along with mental prayer. Even for those who are far advanced in the interior life, there should be definite times for vocal prayer in their schedule and these should be observed with care. "I do not suggest, however, that they should give up vocal prayer entirely, and still less do I wish them to despise it as being suitable only for a lower type of soul. There would be intolerable pride in the idea that they could do without it, and they would be infallibly

lead into the delusion of being themselves highly spiritual. Those who have made the greatest progress in the interior life and are most advanced in the practice of mental prayer still have their regular times of vocal prayer, in the morning, the evening, and the course of the day; to say nothing of the prayers of obligation and of public worship. The Holy Spirit, however strong His influence, hardly ever opposes any obstacle to these kinds of prayers, but allows them absolute freedom; or if He should suggest their suspension, it is only for a few moments. I do not think, therefore, that on any pretext whatever, except in very rare and extraordinary cases, a christian should pass a single day without offering or reciting a vocal prayer of some kind."¹

Another advantage in the practice of vocal prayer which Grou mentions "is to fix the attention of the uneducated, ignorant minds, and the quick, volatile imaginations of persons who lack concentration, or are entirely absorbed in their affairs, or even attacked by temptation. Among these dispositions there are always some to which the person yields more or less voluntarily, and must strive to correct; and in this endeavor vocal prayer is a very efficacious help when it is sincerely and heartily offered."²

"The practice of ejaculatory prayer is an excellent means for the acquirement of recollectedness, because it tends to recall us often to ourselves and to God. It is a very good

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 270

2. Ibid p. 269

thing to bind one's self to the custom; but yet such prayers must not be made a matter of routine. They should rise from the heart rather than the lips, and are best when they consist of a simple turning of the soul towards God, unaccompanied by any words expressed or understood. We can not take too much pains to acquire this method of prayer. If it becomes daily more frequent and grows into a habit, it disposes the mind to that prayer which is without ceasing."¹

Vocal prayer is also necessary and effective for beginners in the practice of devotion. But as they advance in understanding and feeling "it is a good thing to relax the practice of vocal prayer gradually, and replace it by mental prayer, either in the form of meditation or the prayer of silence. The action of the Holy Spirit on the heart cannot be allowed too much freedom; and that action, which tends to draw us inwards and aims at creating peace, recollectedness and silence, cannot endure to be disturbed by external prayer, which distracts the soul's attention."²

Vocal prayer is necessary again for the use of children in their early years. However, when their minds begin to mature and their emotions begin to develop, they should be taught that there is a better kind of prayer and should be gently led little by little into the practice of mental prayer. "Up to a certain age they (children) are capable of vocal prayer only. But when reason, and especially

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 102

2. The School of Jesus Christ, p. 240

feeling, begin to develop in them, would it not be well to teach them that there is another kind of prayer, which is more pleasing to God and more useful to the soul? Could they not be led to it quite gently by being taught to begin their prayers with an act of interior adoration, to end them in the same way, and in the course of them to pause for a few moments at intervals? This practice would be very profitable -- The Holy Spirit would make a very perceptible impression on these innocent hearts, and give them happy experiences that they would never forget. Should they forsake the practice later on, this memory would bring it to their mind, and in some moment of grace induce them to resume it."¹

Grou realized also that there are many who are attached to vocal prayer and practice it only because of limitations in themselves. Some of these are clearly recognized by the individuals concerned and others are not. Some are attached too closely to things perceptible to the senses; some fear that they are not really praying or that they are not praying effectively unless they pray vocally; others realize their weakness in face of distractions and feel that by focusing their attention with words, either of their own or from a book, they can keep their senses and imagination from leading their minds astray. Grou feels that, while these limitations are deplorable, they are real and they must be endured in

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 269

others but he urges that we "strive to cure them in ourselves." He is careful to point out that he would not "disturb and alarm Christian souls with regard to their praying. My only wish is to convince them that there is a more excellent way than praying aloud: Namely to beg the Holy Spirit to teach us; to attempt repeatedly to keep silence in God's presence for a few moments; to refuse to be discouraged if we should not at once be successful as we should like; to keep our imagination from taking fright at a method of prayer that it finds strange and difficult; and to accustom our minds to it little by little. I can answer for it that those who adopt this course with discretion will find it profitable to them, and will be glad that they made the effort of renouncing their former practices."¹

It is Grou's opinion that the majority of those Christians who confine themselves to the practice of vocal prayer only, do so not because of real limitations, but because they are concerned almost entirely with themselves in their praying, or on the other hand, because they are afraid to seek the gift of mental prayer for fear that it will pledge them to a life more spiritual and perfect than they desire. Self-love is the real barrier that stands in the way in both cases. That quality of complete devotion to God which is necessary for union with God is lacking; the immolation of self is only partial. There is no full consecration of the

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 270

self to God and the human will has been given over to the Will of God with specific reservations. "They make for themselves a plan of devotion, not according to God's idea, but according to their own, wherein they are willing to submit partially to the leadings of grace, but not willing to be governed by it only in all things. In everything not specifically commanded, or in things disagreeable of performance, they believe in their right to choose for themselves, and that God does not intend to restrain us that we should depend on His guidance for each detail of our conduct."¹ Grou assumes that those who make prayer a serious element in their lives, will soon develop to the point of passing on to mental prayer. "I will here observe that nearly all those who confine themselves to vocal prayer are usually concerned with themselves in their prayers; that more spiritual Christians who practice meditation generally use it as a means to amendment of life, their reflections, affections, and resolutions having no other aim than the avoidance of sin, the correction of their faults, and the acquisition of virtues; and that it is only the truly interior souls who give to God Himself the chief place in their prayers, and are entirely dedicated to His glory, His love and His adorable will."² In another place Grou says of vocal prayer, "Do not conclude that, because you must not use many words when praying, (in accordance with the instruction of

1. Self-Consecration, p. 18

2. The School of Jesus Christ p. 241

the Master in Matthew 6:7&8) your prayers ought therefore to be short. Nothing is further from the intention of Jesus Christ, who in another place bids us to pray always, without ceasing. It is vocal prayers that He wishes us not to multiply to excess, especially with a single object; but the prayer of the heart, which is true prayer, cannot possibly continue too long, and God is never wearied by it. -- Do not tell me that you can only pray with your heart while you are praying with your mouth, and that the moment your mouth is silent you become idle and inattentive. If that were the case, you would not be praying with your heart even while your mouth prayed; you would only be following the words with your mind, and feeling would have no part in your prayer."¹

All real prayer then, according to Grou, is mental prayer, for vocal prayer is but the outward expression of mental prayer. What is the nature of this real prayer? It is supernatural intercourse between two spiritual beings. It is the expression of love on the part of two persons, each to the other. Grou states it in the following citations. "'God is a Spirit,' said Jesus Christ, 'and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth.' Prayer, then, is in itself an entirely spiritual act, and is addressed to the Supreme Spirit, the Spirit who sees all things, and is, as S. Augustine says, more closely united to our soul than

its deepest depths. If to this essential prayer we join a particular attitude of the body, and certain words and outward demonstrations, these things signify nothing in themselves and are pleasing to God only in so far as they express the feelings of the heart. Properly speaking it is the heart that prays, it is to the voice of the heart that God listens, and it is the heart that He answers; and when we speak of the heart we mean the most spiritual part of us. It is a remarkable fact that, in the Scriptures, prayer is always ascribed to the heart: and, truly, it is the heart that God teaches, and through the heart which has learnt to pray that He then enlightens the mind."1 "Jesus Christ adored in spirit - that is, His adoration was interior, founded on the knowledge of God and Himself, as also on the clear perception of what, as man, He owed to God. - The soul may adore without giving expression to her sentiments by words or otherwise, and this species of silent homage is peculiarly appropriate to the pure Spirit who penetrates our secret thoughts and inmost feelings."2

Grou then proceeds to tell us that love is the voice of the heart and that it is with love that we pray. "The voice of the heart is love. Love God, and your heart will be always talking to Him, always praying to Him. The germ of love is the germ of prayer; the development and perfection of love are the development and perfection of prayer. If

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 230

2. The Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. I p. 369f

you cannot understand this, you have never yet either loved or prayed. Ask God to open your heart, and to kindle in it a spark of His love; then you will begin to understand what praying means."¹

This prayer of the heart with the voice of love is founded on the gift of the self to God. "Therefore, the gift of one's self to God, with all its consequences, is the touchstone of true prayer. - This prayer is all love as much on God's side as with the soul; it is so gentle, sweet and nourishing to the heart, that it is the constant desire of the Christian."² Real is that disposition of the heart which gives itself in love and adoration to God, the Supreme Good, the Perfect Love. It is a state in which there is both giving and receiving of love.

As we have said, Grou divides mental prayer into active and passive or Meditation and Contemplation. The first corresponds to the way of active Renunciation in ascetic practice and the active degree of the mystic way. The second corresponds to the passive way of Renunciation in the practice of asceticism and the passive degree in the mystic way. He distinguishes them in the following passage. "It is well known that there are two kinds of mental prayer, Meditation and Contemplation. Meditation is to contemplation what active recollectedness is to passive. In meditation, all the powers of the soul, memory, understanding, will, and even imagination,

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 231
 2. Self-Consecration, p. 100

have free scope, and from each is drawn what is most suitable to the end in view. A distinct subject is presented before the mind, on which reflections are made: affections are thence drawn out, and resolutions are formed. There many good books on this matter, and I shall here say little respecting it.

"In contemplation, or prayer properly so called, the soul neither reflects nor forms affections and resolutions. Yet neither the understanding nor the will are idle. For if the contemplation be distinct, the understanding sees, though without any chain of reasoning, the object presented to it by God. -- If it be confused, and does not offer to the soul any special object, the understanding sedulously holds itself in the presence of God, humbles itself before His Supreme Majesty, and listens silently to the instructions given without sound or distinctness of words, which is the manner in which God's instructions are commonly given. This attention is itself an act of understanding, unperceived because so simple, but not therefore the less real. The confused, general indistinct object, which is then present to the soul, is God Himself, wrapped in the cloud of faith; while in distinct contemplation God sets forth some one of His perfections, or some particular mystery of religion.

"We may form some idea of these two sorts of contemplation, if we remember the different ways in which we look at things about us, sometimes fixing our eyes on one certain point,

but sometimes looking vaguely, and attracted by nothing in particular.

"Nor is the repose of the will in contemplation to be considered as inaction. For, in the first place, its freedom is continually exercised, because we are at prayer only because we choose to be so. - Secondly, the will is either in a state of union, or constant tendency to union, with God as it practices this exercise with the one object of being united to Him. In the third place, when it receives a sense of Divine sweetness, peace and joy are shed abroad upon it, and are gladly accepted. Lastly, if the soul receives nothing, and the time of prayer is a time of suffering, the will is then in a state of sacrifice, accepted in submission to God's good pleasure."¹

In the above citation Grou not only distinguishes between active mental prayer (Meditation) and passive mental prayer (Contemplation), but he points out that there are two kinds of contemplation or passive prayer. In one the objects that the Holy Spirit presents to the mind are distinct and clear to the understanding and as such are accepted by the will. While in the other there are no distinct images but rather the sense of the presence of God Himself as a whole. This Grou calls the prayer of bare faith, which is, in his opinion, the finest kind of prayer.

He also emphasizes in this passage that in this kind of

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 137f

passive prayer the understanding and the will are active in their submission and acceptance of that state of possession by the Spirit of God in which they are held. In other words, they are passive so far as man is concerned, but very active in willing and receiving what God sends. They are passive but entirely active as they are willingly acted upon by the Holy Spirit. The same idea is found in the citation which follows. "Let us imagine a soul so closely united to God that it can remain concentrated on inward prayer without any need of explicit acts: in these moments of silence and peace, when the attention is turned entirely away from self, the soul will pray, and pray very effectually, with a simple and direct prayer which God will understand perfectly, while the soul is itself unaware of it, being as it were transported out of itself by the action of grace. The heart will be full of Godward sentiments, not definitely expressed, and so spiritual that they escape its own consciousness: but they will not escape the consciousness of God. This prayer that is so devoid of images and apperceptions, so apparently passive and yet so active, is, so far as the conditions of this life allow, pure adoration in spirit and truth. It is adoration truly worthy of God, in which the ground of the soul is united to Him, the created intelligence to the Intelligence that is Uncreated, without the intervention of imagination or reasoning, or

anything but a very simple attention of the mind and an equally simple application of the will. This is what is called the Prayer of Silence, or of Quiet, or of Simple Regard, or of Bare Faith: a form of prayer in which God trains by degrees those who have truly given themselves to Him, and who are governed by His grace in a special manner. Of all graces this is the one He is most pleased to bestow; but not many Christians are willing to prepare themselves for its reception by detachment and purity of heart."¹ We note that in the above quotation also the understanding and the will are described as passive except for "a simple attention toward God" which is often unconscious to the person praying.

In another passage, Grou describes this prayer as the most acceptable that any man can make. "It is not the words or the specific acts used at prayer that attract the gracious attention of our Maker; it is the intention; the feelings; the interior preparation. The best prayer is that accompanied rather by peace and recollection than by great activity and violent exertion; that in which the soul calmly presents herself before her Maker, and simply gives expression to the feelings excited not by herself but by grace. This is the most acceptable of prayers, because it is more the production of God than of our own efforts; His operations being unchecked by human ardor and eagerness, the result

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 253

only of self-love."1

This is presented as the kind of prayer that our Lord prayed while on earth. "When Christ thus conversed with His Father His prayer was usually confined to the interior, though doubtless the affections of His soul occasionally found vent in sighs, tears, and words. One truth is incontestable, viz., that His prayer ever emanated from the heart, and that God will accept none from us unless it flow from the same source. This is the essential point, after which it belongs to the Spirit of God to direct the soul as to the method of prayer, suggesting either forms of vocal supplication or silent annihilation in the Divine Presence. --

"How perfect is His prayer; He does not speak; He does not meditate; He does not produce any particular acts or affections; His prayer is nothing more than the voluntary submission with which He bows to His actual condition from the pure motive of glorifying God. -

That prayer is always profitable which humbles the soul; which impresses her deeply with the conviction of her Maker's sovereign perfection, and her own absolute nothingness; which mortifies her pride, wounds her self-love, and annihilates her natural feelings and inclinations; in a word, which experimentally proves to her the folly of relying on her own efforts, and deprives her of all resources in self."2

From this discussion of the nature or essence of prayer,

1. The Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. I, p. 75
2. Ibid Vol. I, p. 246, 63

we turn to see what Grou says in answer to the question: what should one pray for? What is the object that one should try to attain in prayer? The three citations which follow give his answer pretty clearly.

"Prayer is generally understood to include merely a petition to God; but should it not be viewed under many other aspects? Is it not an ecstasy of admiration and love at the consideration of God's majesty and perfections? Does it not comprise adoration, praise, thanksgiving, oblation, desire that God be adored and served, regret that He is not known and loved as He deserves? Is it not really excellent when the glory of God is its immediate object? And should we not likewise admit the influence of that divine precept of fraternal love which demands that we promote our fellow-creatures' interests with as much earnestness as our own?"¹

"Prayer, like sacrifice, has four objects: adoration, thanksgiving, obtaining pardon for sin, and the acquisition of blessings spiritual and temporal. the first two directly concern God, and are for that reason undeniably the most important. The last two are concerned with our own interests, and should only receive our attention afterwards."²

It follows that when ever we appear before God with the object of praying to Him, our first intention should be to adore His Supreme Majesty, to prostrate ourselves before Him, and pay Him the tribute of glory that is His due; the

1. The Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. I, p. 244
2. The School of Jesus Christ p. 235

second should be to acknowledge the benefits - common, personal, natural, or supernatural - which His liberality has bestowed on us, and to thank Him for them with our hearts' deepest affection; the third, to express our profound regret for having offended Him, and to beg for His forgiveness; and the fourth and last, to make known to Him the needs of our soul and body, and place our spiritual and temporal affairs in His hands, in complete confidence that whatever He ordains will be for our greatest advantage."¹

Grou stresses the fact that adoration and thanksgiving are always the primary objects in good prayer. However, self-love and self-interest often interfere and cause man to put his own interests ahead of this primary object. "But self-love, by which our prayers are as much influenced, to say the least, as are other matters, reverses the order that has been established by the very nature of things, as well as by divine institution and the example of Jesus Christ. It cannot endure that we should, when invoking or serving God, have regard to anything but ourselves, or put before us any aim but our own interests. It can only conceive of prayer as a petition, a request presented to God in order to gain a particular boon from Him: it completely ignores the main idea of homage, and the tribute of love and gratitude."²

Grou points out several imperfections in prayer which have self-love as their root. The first and most imperfect

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 235
 2. Ibid 236

is that prayer which is devoted to the attainment of material blessings. "One degree higher than these judaical Christians (who pray for material blessings) I would place those who, when they pray, have no object in view but their salvation, and are moreover less concerned with the idea of gaining Paradise than that of avoiding Hell. - Here again it is self-love that prompts and directs devotion. This is not wicked, assuredly, but it is very imperfect."¹

Even in the matter of our own personal salvation, the purely selfish interest should always be secondary to the glory of God. Here as in all matters of the spiritual life, God should be the center and not self. "It is certainly a matter for disapproval that a person's mind should be entirely concentrated on this object, and that the eyes should never be raised above self and fixed on God. Penitence is undeniably necessary; but we should find our principal motives for it in the goodness of God, which we have outraged."²

Another common imperfection that should be avoided is the prayer that makes spiritual benefits primary. This kind of prayer becomes better in its object when the petition is broadened to include blessings for our fellowmen. It becomes good when we pray for spiritual benefits in order to bring glory and honor to God; when we aspire to be holy to please Him. "I must therefore rank among the defective prayers

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 238
 2. Ibid p. 239

those which are limited to requests for spiritual benefits, with no consideration beyond the petitioner's advantage, the merits he will acquire, and the high degree of glory and happiness to which he will attain. Self-love has often a surprisingly large share in the desire to preserve a clear conscience, correct faults, and make progress in the virtues; and however small the share may be it is always too large, for self-love has no place at all in holiness, which demands its utter destruction. This kind of prayer would be good, and indeed excellent if you would make it less personal, if you would consider yourself less, and aspire to be holy simply to please God."¹

Grou brings up the question as to whether we should pray in general with adoration and thanksgiving and plead that God's will be done rather than to offer specific petitions. "Should we simply surrender into God's hands all our affairs and necessities, both temporal and spiritual, and abstain from all prayers except general requests on these subjects?

"Strictly speaking, I believe that up to a certain point it would be best to adhere to this general method. Masters of the spiritual life commonly give this advice, which is followed fairly closely by those of a truly devoted spirit. Nevertheless, since it is certain that God sometimes urges souls to pray for particular objects, we should be prepared

to do so when we have reason to believe that His Spirit is prompting us. This is the disposition at which we should aim in regard to spiritual and temporal objects of prayer, when we have no moral certainty of God's intention.

"The first thing we must do is to make this type of request sincerely subordinate in our mind and heart to the glory of God and our own salvation, or the salvation of those for whom we are praying."¹

"Those who are unable to conceive how the heart can pray alone, without distinct acts, cannot understand either how a simple, general prayer can perfectly well include all particular prayers. I need not say that there is one exception, namely vocal prayers of **obligation**. In this matter it is a common practice to treat God as though He were a man, and could not understand a prayer unless every detail of its requests were explained to Him. There are many who fix upon their intention, have special formulas for each act of prayer, mention individuals by name, and imagine, if the smallest detail should **escape** their memory, that God cannot supply it. O souls of little faith, and little knowledge of God, your intentions have reached Him before you have opened your mouth."²

The following passage showing that it is wrong to pray for the removal of trials or temptations is pertinent. "But, you will say, it is on account of the faults I am daily

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 261
2. Ibid p. 233

tempted to commit and the fear of falling that I pray for an end to these crosses and temptations. Ought not God to grant my prayer? No: He offers you His grace, -- a certain means of avoiding these faults and resisting temptation; let that means suffice you, and do not importune God to deliver you from the things that serve to humble and mortify you. To ask in the right way it is necessary that the Holy Spirit should ask for us with unspeakable groanings."¹

Every good prayer then, according to Grou, is a prayer that brings glory to God and such a prayer must have this intention in the heart of the person praying. In these next citations he sums up this idea. "When all these classes of Christians have been considered there remains only a very small residue, whose prayers are mainly offered with the two intentions that have God for their object. One of these is to thank Him for His benefits, both general and particular, and praise His kindness and love to mankind. .. Every loving and grateful Christian who is keenly aware of his own miserable weakness, and accustomed to dwell on the mercies of the Lord, can find in such thoughts enough to occupy most of the time devoted to prayer, as well as inexhaustable matter for meditation. .. The second intention is to consider God in Himself, to adore His supreme Majesty, to contemplate His infinite perfections, and to offer Him praise."²

"To act for God's glory is to adore God in truth. .. we adore God in spirit and in truth if we desire that He

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 274
 2. Ibid p. 240

reign first in our hearts and then in the hearts of our fellow-beings; if we facilitate His reign by obeying His inspirations, removing all obstacles to His undivided empire, and exerting our influence to promote the same end in others, frequently and earnestly praying for this intention... The interior soul alone fully understands the real nature of detachment... In a word, under the operation which divests her of herself she has but to submit to God's action and passively to acquiesce in His holy will."¹

Grou points out six characteristics of good prayer. "Since it is God who teaches us to pray, it follows that our prayer, if it proceed from the Holy Spirit who prayeth in us (Rom. VIII, 26), will be attentive, humble, reverent, loving, confident, and persevering."² "Only those whose interior life is truly spiritual, - those who, in S. Paul's words, are led by the spirit of God, - habitually frame prayers that contain all the requisite qualities."³

In connection with the third characteristic, that prayer should be loving, Grou has the following to say. "God desires to be loved as much as He is respected: and the Holy Spirit, who is the eternal love of the Father and the Son, inspires no prayer that is not altogether born of love, or does not lead to love. It should be love, or at least the desire of love that prompts the Christian to pray; love should be the final aim if not the subject of his prayer;

1. The Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. I, p. 372, 374, 383, 384
2. The School of Jesus Christ p. 243
3. Ibid p. 249

and increase of love should be its fruit."¹

In this connection also Grou points out that faithful persons are often distressed with the periods of dryness and the accompanying feeling of lovelessness that come to them as they advance in prayer. He indicates that this is the usual thing and assures the soul that the very fact that they are alarmed is an indication that love is still alive in their hearts. "The heart that does not love is not in the least alarmed because it feels no sensation of love; consequently a heart which is distressed by the absence of that feeling, and desires its presence cannot be loveless, though it may contain an element of imperfection and self-seeking. A soul which has made a certain amount of progress knows that love is not a matter of sensation, but lies in the determination of the will to do all and suffer all for God. The more that kind of love is denuded of feeling, the stronger and purer it is."²

Regarding confidence as a quality of prayer, Grou gives the following pertinent statement. "When it is He (the Holy Spirit) who makes us pray, it is evident that He will influence us to ask only such things as He has resolved to give us, and that the first thing He will grant us is a firm confidence of obtaining our request. It is this confidence that He answers. He therefore inspires it as an essential condition. It is our part to be led by the

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 246
 2. Ibid p. 247

inspiration, and not to allow the confidence to be weakened by any fear or any kind of reasoning."¹

In his discussion of the quality of perseverance in prayer, Grou sums up in the following words. "The groundwork of their (those who are led by the Holy Spirit) prayer is nothing but love; and even when their needs are its immediate object the glory of God is always its end. They are never wanting in confidence and perseverance: they pray with the firmest faith, expecting all things of their heavenly Father's kindness, and knowing that, if He should delay to grant their requests, it will only be for their greater good."²

When discussing the dispositions that prayer demands in men, Grou first sets forth two principles. "The first is that salvation, and the whole edifice of Christian perfection, depend on effectual prayer. For God, in the ordinary course of His providence, has made the graces which lead to perfection dependent upon prayer. We shall therefore infallibly obtain them if we pray well.

The whole sequence forms a chain of which the first link is prayer. This is undeniable. If a man does not receive the graces he needs, or makes a bad use of them, it is because he has grown careless in the practice of prayer; the weakening of the Christian life always begins with that. Apart from it a man may receive a few slight wounds and now and then may fall; but if he clings to the habit of prayer,

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 247
 2. Ibid p. 250

and always strives to acquit himself well in it, every wound will be healed and every injury bound up and repaired. Prayer is a preservative, and indeed a universal remedy.

"The second principle is that the Christian's prayer is always good when the Holy Spirit prays in him, and that, conversely, it is more or less defective in proportion to the human element it contains."¹

Does this mean that the Christian should give up all his efforts of his own accord and wait for the Holy Spirit to act in him? Grou answers this in the negative. The Christian should follow the path of prayer in which he is led by the Spirit, be it active, passive or vocal, for all real prayer is inspired by the Spirit of God and one should change only under His leadership.

"If I make no effort at all, and wait for the Holy Spirit to take the lead, I become perfectly passive and expose myself to illusion. And moreover it seems to me that this kind of prayer by the Holy Spirit is orison, an advanced form of mental prayer. That it is a gift from God which I cannot obtain by my own effort, and it would be a dangerous error, as all spiritual masters admit, to enter on my own initiative upon this path.

"Here is the answer to your difficulty: It is not only mental prayer that the Holy Spirit creates in us, but also vocal prayer, meditation, aspirations, and active contemplation.

I agree, however, that orison is the basis of all these forms of prayer when we are possessed by the Holy Spirit while offering them."1

Here we have the foundation of Grou's whole doctrine of prayer. All real prayer is lead by the Holy Spirit praying for us in the depths of the heart. If it is the Holy Spirit that is leading us and doing the praying in us, it has bare faith or orison as its basis. The understanding and the will are submitted to God as the Holy Spirit comes into the heart, takes them over and prays through them. The Holy Spirit takes charge of the dispositions in the heart and turns its love more and more to a state of adoration and worship of God. This reaches its advanced stage when the Holy Spirit takes full control of the faculties and man only acts as the Spirit acts in him. The heart and mind of man have in them only those perceptions and impulses which are put there by the Holy Spirit. Man raises no question, no opposition, but is yielded freely and actively to the Spirit's dominion. "Our real prayer is found already in germ and substance, in the very root of our will, before it passes into words or thoughts; in short, that our most spiritual and direct acts precede all reflection, and are neither felt nor perceived unless we are keeping a most careful watch for them."2

This kind of prayer can and ought to be continuous,

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 252
2. Manual for Interior Souls p. 265

according to Grou, because it is founded in the depths of the heart where the dispositions are. We give here several quotations showing his position on continual prayer.

"If it is the heart that prays, it is evident that sometimes, and even habitually, it can pray by itself, with no assistance from words either expressed or mental... It prays as the mind thinks. Now thought is formed in the mind before it is clothed in words. The proof of this fact is that we often search for the right word, and reject one after another until we find one which expresses our thought precisely. We need words to make us intelligible to others, but they are of no use to us in our own minds; and if we were pure spirit, we should use no language to formulate or to communicate our thoughts. It is the same in the case of the heart and its feelings."¹

"But God reads the secrets of the heart. To make ourselves understood by Him, then, it is not necessary to resort to formal acts, even such as are purely interior; and, if we should make some in the course of our prayer, it is not so much on His account as on our own, to keep our attention fixed in His presence. Our weakness often demands the assistance of these acts; but they are not of the essence of prayer, and God, when He pleases, gradually lifts the soul above this need."²

"The prayer of Jesus Christ was perpetual, uninterrupted,

1. The School of Jesus Christ p. 230
 2. Ibid p. 232

even momentarily either by exterior action or by the necessary repose which nature demanded; nevertheless there were fixed periods which He devoted exclusively to prayer, withdrawing at those times from His disciples, and retiring to some secluded spot to converse alone with God... From this example we learn that prayer is the first duty of the Christian; that whatever be our condition in life, whatever our avocations we should always find time for this holy exercise... What I mean is, that the Christian should ever be united to God, like his divine model Jesus Christ, by a certain attention of the mind and affection of the heart, which is, in fact, habitual prayer."¹

Continual prayer, in Grou's opinion, is the only kind of prayer by which we can cooperate in the fulfilment of God's intentions in man.

"How then, and by what kind of prayer, can we fulfil the intentions of our Lord and Master? By the prayer of the heart, which consists of an habitual and constant disposition of love to God, of trust in Him, of resignation to His will in all the events of our lives; in a continual attention to the voice of God, speaking to us in the depths of our consciences and unceasingly suggesting to us thoughts and desires of good and perfection."²

"What kind of prayer is it? It is the essence of prayer, the only kind that attracts God's attention, the kind that

1. The Interior of Jesus and Mary, Vol. I p. 240ff, 140
2. Manual for Interior Souls p. 263

gives their value to all other kinds, --in a word, the prayer of the heart. Prayer of this nature can continue without interruption, and no other can.

"Now, when once the Holy Spirit has begun to pray in a heart His intention is to pray in it always, and it is our fault if His intention be not fulfilled; for it depends on us to make its fulfilment possible by responding to His inward action, and giving Him the entire mastery over our will...

"Among the actions that may be regarded as prayer I would include visits of politeness and good manners; I would even include amusing conversations and necessary relaxations of body and mind, provided they be harmless, and carried no further than is allowed by Christian principles. None of these occupations is incompatible with continual prayer; with the exception of things that are wrong, inexpedient, or useless there is nothing that the Holy Spirit cannot make His own, nothing that He cannot contrive to sanctify, and bring into the realm of prayer."¹

Continual prayer, according to Grou, instead of being difficult is natural. It is very rare, however, because there are very few who have the right dispositions for it. They may often be unconscious of it, but down in the deep recesses of the heart self-love still lurks and this prevents the work of the Holy Spirit.

"Continual prayer is therefore not difficult in itself,

and nevertheless it is very rare, because there are very few hearts in the right dispositions to make it and courageous and faithful enough to persevere in it. We cannot begin to enter on this way of prayer until we have given ourselves entirely to God."¹

"Why is this gift, which God would gladly make common, so very rare? It is entirely our own fault. Instead of desiring it, we fear it. Instead of preparing to receive it, we deliberately, and often systematically, do everything that is required to keep it away. What is the reason of this fear? It is that most of us wish always to be our own masters up to a certain point, and never belong altogether to the Holy Spirit. His guidance would lead us too far and commit us too deeply; we do not positively renounce all aspirations to holiness, but we wish to be holy in the degree that we choose, not the degree that God chooses.

"Here I have put my finger on the deeply rooted tendency of the majority of those who profess to be pious. They carefully hide it from themselves because it is bad; but as a matter of fact it is there. It is this disposition alone that arrests the operation of the Holy Spirit and prevents Him from praying in us. Every other cause is alleged; every sort of excuse is put forward. They are nothing but self-deception and deception of others. Nothing that God has implanted in us, nor any condition of life, nor any

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 265

profession or employment that is ordained by providence, can be an invincible obstacle to the bestowal and exercise of the gift of mental prayer. It is equally suitable for the young and for the old, for the sick and for the strong; everything that leaves us the free use of our reason leaves God the free use of His grace. Our part is to take advantage of it when it is offered to us."¹

The practice of continual prayer leads to complete submission to God and union with God. Thus it leads to the great enjoyment of the blessings of heaven, although the path may be filled with suffering and pain.

"When this prayer is no longer sensible and perceptible, its effects are to detach us from spiritual consolations, and to make us capable of receiving them with far greater purity when it pleases God to give them to us; to make us die by degrees to self and self-love...

"It may seem to her that God rejects her prayer, that He forsakes her, that He is angry with her, and that she has nothing to expect in this life and in the other but the effects of His just vengeance.

"This lasts as long as is necessary until she is completely lost in God, and until she is dead to self-love in all its forms. And after this mystical death she rises again, and enters, even in this life, upon the enjoyment of a foretaste of the life of beatitude in heaven. This is

where continual prayer will lead us, if it is well understood and well practiced."¹

"This prayer, which at first is like a gently penetrating dew, ordinarily becomes hard and painful in its progress; but it is none the less peaceful and near to God, and unites the soul to Him even more immediately. It is no longer a prayer demanding all the powers of the soul, but a prayer from its depths, which, expressing itself only in silence, is an image of the tranquil and ineffable enjoyment which God possesses in Himself. In truth, prayer draws us on day by day into God, until self is lost and the soul lives only in Him."²

This kind of prayer, orison, the prayer of bare faith, is definitely the gift of God, according to Grou, but man should keep himself in readiness to receive the gift when it comes. While he should never try to enter it of himself, he should listen carefully for the leading of the Spirit and follow His direction without hesitation.

"As a general rule, as long as a person is being led by the ordinary way, and is able to preserve the free use of his understanding, it is right for him to make reflections, and apply himself to meditation, without relying on it too much, however, or trying to dig too deeply, because there can very well be an abuse of meditation, as of all good things."³

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 268f
2. Self-Consecration, p. 100
3. Manual for Interior Souls p. 377

"Whether we are reading, or meditating, or repeating vocal prayers, it is good to pause from time to time, and let the soul quite suspend its own action to give place to the working of God. If we feel at all touched by grace at such moments, we cannot do better than give way to it, and quietly enjoy the feelings God gives us; and when that impression has passed away, we can resume our book or our prayers.

"These passing touches are a small beginning of infused prayer, to which we ought to correspond very faithfully; they are momentary visits, wherein God communicates Himself."¹

"If you should be filled with a sweet sense of peace and be inwardly drawn towards silence, it is a sign that the Holy Spirit is taking special possession of your soul, and giving you a first tentative hint, as it were, of the gift of higher mental prayer. Then you must be silent, and suspend the exercise of your faculties, and hold yourself calmly passive under the operation of the Holy Spirit."²

Again in discussing some of the characteristics of this higher form of mental prayer, which he calls the prayer of Quiet or Bare Faith, Grou reiterates that one must not seek it of his own power or even wish to enter it, except when God shall take possession of the faculties of the soul, then there should be cooperation and full submission.

"We cannot enter of ourselves upon this way; it is for

1. Spiritual Maxims p.102
2. The School of Jesus Christ p.253

God alone to lead into it those souls upon whom He has special designs. Neither spiritual books, nor directors, nor our own efforts, can do anything here; we must wait for grace to act, and not allow ourselves to think about such a state of prayer, still less to desire it, for if we do we shall most certainly be exposed to the danger of delusion. But at the same time we must never deny that there is such a way of prayer, and that the chief sign by which we may know that God wishes to lead a soul into it, is when that soul has no longer the same liberty of using her faculties in prayer that she formerly had."¹

In the five brief passages which follow Grou gives five further characteristics of this prayer of Bare Faith.

"The way of faith is essentially a dark way, a way in which the soul can know nothing by the ordinary light of reason, a way in which the principal intention of God is to make the soul die to her own spirit."²

"The way of faith is a way in which God, the Sole Master of the soul and her liberty which she has given to Him, takes possession of her, disposes of her as He pleases, works in her according to His will, exercises over her a supreme dominion, and allows nothing to oppose His action."³

"The way of faith is a way of sacrifice, a way of continual self-immolation, a way which ends in the total loss of the soul in God."⁴

1. Manual for Interior Souls p.378
2. Ibid p. 379
3. Ibid p. 379
4. Ibid p. 380

"The way of faith is a way of temptations, in which God gives the devil a strange power over the soul on purpose to try her."¹

"It is certain that the soul, in this way of prayer, must admit no other thoughts than those that come to her from God... The less the soul reflects the more she will advance, the stronger she will be against the devil and against herself, the more generosity she will have to accomplish all the sacrifices which God asks of her."²

The way of bare faith, then, is a way of complete submission of the soul and its faculties into the possession of the Holy Spirit and to the action of God's grace. Those whom God leads into this way are being led into the way of perfect abandonment to the pleasure and will of God. Grou considers this the highest degree of prayer and the highest state of spiritual perfection that can be reached in this life on earth.

The center around which all spiritual life revolves is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Grou would emphasize this beyond any doubt. "Christ is the center, not only of our religion, but of our spiritual life. In whatever path the soul may be led, active, passive, ordinary, or extraordinary, He is its one Guide and Pattern; the chief subject of its meditation and contemplation, the object of its affection, the goal of its course. He is its Physician, Shepherd, and

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 381
 2. Ibid p. 382f

King; its Food and Delight. And there is none other name given under heaven, whereby men may be saved, or may come to perfection."¹

Grou tells us to look to Christ's example for the perfect prayer. "Go to the school of Jesus Christ, there to learn the nature of that really excellent prayer which most perfectly glorifies God and most effectually insures the progress of the soul. You will find it to be that which most closely resembles His own; that in which the soul is immolated not only in desire but in reality; that in which she is overwhelmed by the combined weight of God's majesty and her own abjection, His sanctity and her corruption; that in which she is penetrated with regret for the insults offered by herself and her fellow-creatures to her Maker; that in which she devotes herself as a loving victim of satisfaction to divine justice, too happy that the Almighty deigns to accept her holocaust in union with that of His adorable Son."²

In answer to the question as to whether one can know that his prayer is good Grou has the following to say. "The usual proof of the goodness of prayer, is the generous and constant practice of interior mortification. There is no cause for apprehension concerning the prayer of a person who is singlehearted, straightforward, teachable, humble, capable of great self-control, endued with a good will,

1. Spiritual Maxims p. 42

2. The Interior of Jesus and Mary Vol. I p. 251

cheerfully undertaking every means suggested for overcoming faults, acknowledging them frankly, and taking rebukes in good part. If the Spirit of God guides the rest of his conduct, will it forsake him at the time of prayer? We cannot suppose this possible."¹

We bring to a close this examination of Grou's teaching on prayer with a brief summary. All real prayer, whether vocal, active or passive, is basicall mental prayer. All real mental prayer is led of the Holy Spirit. All prayer that is led of the Holy Spirit has as its basis faith and the more complete the possession of the Holy Spirit becomes, the larger the element of faith. This reduces all real prayer to a foundation of faith or orison, in which man lets the Holy Spirit pray in him as God wills and pleases. Prayer reaches its highest degree when the Holy Spirit takes complete possession of the human faculties, reason gives way entirely, and the perception and the will are passive except for a deep interior disposition and attention toward God. God communes directly with the soul, speaking to the heart in spiritual intercourse. The knowledge received of God is very real but personal and infused. It is truly experimental knowledge and cannot be transfered to another.

This extraordinary degree of mental prayer is that in which the ecstacies of the extraordinary degree of the of the mystic way are experienced and the consequent mystic

union with God. It is also the kind of prayer in which is experienced the complete annihilation of self of the extraordinary passive way of ascetic practice where the work of destruction is wrought by the Holy Spirit when the soul is completely possessed by Him.

Real prayer is the principle of the spiritual life. It is the medium for intercourse between the soul of man and God. By means of it all the interior practices of the spiritual life are carried on. If we pray aright we shall live aright and we can climb the ladder toward spiritual perfection.

In the final analysis, the living of the spiritual life, by and large, is the practice of real prayer.

CHAPTER IX

GROU'S CONTRIBUTION

When we come to consider the contribution of a man to religious thought, we strive to answer this question. What did he do or teach that helped to advance thinking along religious lines either in his own time or in the generations that followed? With this question before us we have made a survey of the work of Nicolas Grou. The writer feels that, while Grou may not have brought any startling or new idea to the field of religious thought, there are several definite contributions that are worthy of recognition.

First among these contributions is the great emphasis that Grou put on the spiritual side of the Christian life. He lived in a century when the emphasis in Christianity was on works and the outward expression of religion. Great deeds of charity were the order of the day and it was by means of these that men were taught to seek advancement in spirituality. Personal and individual devotion, found in solitude and quiet communion with God, were given a secondary place in the teaching of Church leaders. Grou reversed this attitude by putting the primary emphasis on **p**ersonal and interior communion with God as the basis of the Christian life. While/^{he}never taught that deeds of charity and the performance of public religious duties should be neglected, he did definitely teach that these should not be allowed to interfere

unnecessarily with the practice of personal devotion. Solitude and quiet devotion where the soul speaks to God directly and where God speaks directly to the soul is the medium for growth in the spiritual life and must be primary in any Christian's experience if he seeks to advance on the road toward Christian perfection. This emphasis met with much opposition in Grou's day, in fact, it was opposed by the majority of his fellow Jesuits. However, the weight of this emphasis was felt, particularly in the nineteenth century after his books had been published.

As a second contribution of Nicolas Grou we mention the fact that he ordered and organized the teachings of his predecessors in the school of Jesuit mystic writers. In the chapter of this work on theology, we show that he includes some of the fundamental teachings of Lallemant, de Caussade and others. Not only that, but he also includes the fundamental ascetic teachings of the Jesuits running back to Loyola himself. Grou assembled all the best of this into one unit, which he works out very reasonably in his doctrine of prayer. In this, as we have seen, he makes asceticism largely an interior practice and the mystic way becomes a complement to it.

A third contribution of Nicolas Grou was his re-emphasis on the sacrament of the present moment. While this particular expression is not found anywhere in Grou's writings and he

does not mention it specifically, it is found in his teaching in numerous passages, as was shown in a previous chapter. He evidently follows de Caussade, who lived only a generation before him, very closely for his expressions are often almost identical. The idea that we can only know God and experience His fellowship in the present moment; that the past is behind us and gone forever; that the future is still beyond us and we can neither know nor experience it now; that we must live, experience, know and commune with God moment by moment as they come to us. To live with God in the present and follow the leadership and inspiration of the Holy Spirit from moment to moment is the right disposition for the spiritual life. This can be and is done by means of continual prayer where the heart is always in a disposition of attention to God and the Holy Spirit is in possession of the faculties of the soul. This emphasis on the importance of the present moment, while not original with Grou, is given prominence in his works. It has, since his time, come to occupy a very important place both in religious and philosophical thinking. Its influence will be seen in much of the modern theology.

As a fourth contribution of Nicolas Grou, we call attention to his emphasis on the necessity of experimental knowledge in order to know truth. Over and over again he points out that nonreligious philosophers never found the

truth because they depended on their reason. The revelation of the great mysteries that hide truth must come as a gift of the Holy Spirit and these are unfolded some times by the enlightening of the mind and some times by direct action on the soul. Reason unaided by divine light, says Grou, will run into many kinds of philosophical absurdities and errors. Truth, then, is never known in reality except by those persons who are submitted to the will of God and are given to the service of God without reservation. Then, as they are given to God, the Holy Spirit takes possession of their faculties and reveals to them the hidden mysteries of the gospel and unfolds to them the great truths of real philosophy, which Grou tells us is the same as religion. In prayer God reveals to them His true and perfect nature and shows them the depravity of man. The Spirit brings them into direct spiritual fellowship with God and in the experience of intercourse with God in prayer man learns the great truths experimentally. These are his own personal treasure which he may tell others about but which he cannot impart to them. Only those who are also given to God and who are walking in or living the interior life will understand the nature of this experimental knowledge. For only those whom the Holy Spirit possesses are in a disposition to receive experimental knowledge of God, therefore, all others are blinded in mind and heart to the greatest knowledge

which is that given by the light of the Holy Spirit. In a day when reason and the powers of the human mind were being lifted to the heights, this emphasis on experimental knowledge was treated with scorn in many quarters, religious as well as secular. However, it left its impression, which has been felt, at least in a small way, in the thinking of the last century.

A fifth contribution of Nicolas Grou to religious thought is his doctrine of prayer which is given in the previous chapter. As has been shown, according to him, the entire spiritual life is a life of prayer. It is through prayer that knowledge of God and knowledge of self is obtained. This knowledge causes the desire to immolate self and bring glory to God. This interior asceticism can be practiced only through the means of prayer. Self-love can be driven out of the heart only by the love of God which comes into the heart when it is possessed by the Holy Spirit. This state can come only as man's understanding and will are yielded to God in prayer. All the mysteries which God would reveal to man come by the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart which transpires in prayer. Continual prayer, then, includes all of the activities of the spiritual life. For the outward acts in which a devout person engages are but the outward expression of the action of the Holy Spirit within the heart. Thus, prayer in the

larger sense, when the disposition of the heart is always in attention to God, includes all the Christian's life both interior and exterior. Grou reduced the whole spiritual life to the practice of prayer. If the Christian's praying is good all his spiritual life is good. The writer has not found this presented better anywhere.

The sixth and final contribution of Nicolas Grou to which we call attention is his doctrine of Bare Faith in prayer. This is the doctrine in his teaching that so often led to the charge of Quietism. However, this charge may have been the very thing that made Grou clarify the difference between his teaching and that of Quietism which he claimed to be both error and illusion. Grou emphasizes that no one should try to enter the prayer of Quiet or Bare Faith. One must be led into it by the Holy Spirit. However, one can turn the disposition of his heart toward God so that he will understand the leadership of the Spirit, if God should call him to this way of prayer. In this prayer, the faculties of the soul are taken over by the Holy Spirit as the soul willingly yields to God with the perception and the will turned away from everything other than the voice of God speaking to the heart. The Holy Spirit will then pray through the soul or in the soul as the soul becomes one with God. This action is often not perceptible even by the person in whom it goes on, but it is very real. The soul lets the Holy Spirit take complete control of all its faculties and the Holy Spirit, being in

perfect harmony with the mind and will of God, prays in that soul the prayer that is perfectly pleasing to God. The soul raises no questions, makes no effort to understand or to reason, makes no reservation, but yields and lets the Holy Spirit act in it without seeing or understanding, and only wills to do the will of God. This prayer of the Holy Spirit in and through the faculties of the soul that He possesses, with the soul cooperating by unquestioning and blind submission to God and complete abandonment into His care, is the prayer of Bare Faith; it is orison in the highest sense. In this prayer man comes closer to God and the action of God upon the soul is more direct than in any other way.

In the following citation Grou explains the quiet and often imperceptible action of the Holy Spirit in this high degree of mental prayer. This makes clear that it is not Quietism. "It is quite true that the action of God on the soul, as well as the action of the soul herself, is sometimes imperceptible, but it is nonetheless real: only then it is even more direct, more close, more spiritual. Even in a natural state, how many interior movements are there of which we take no note, and which are nevertheless the motive-principle of our exterior actions? I look, I speak, I walk, I turn away my eyes, I keep silence, I stop, just because I will to do so; and, in a general way, I pay no attention to

this constant exercise of my will. It is just the same, and still more so, in the supernatural state. We pray without thinking that we are praying; our heart is united to God, and we are not conscious of this union. Therefore, it must not be said that those whom God raises to the prayer of quiet are doing nothing, and losing their time: they are in reality acting there in a manner which is very real, although very secret, and, besides that, in a manner in which self-love can find nothing to nourish it, or to attract it, or to reassure it. And it is in this that the great advantage of this state of prayer consists; it is the very death and destruction of self-love; it is the soul losing itself entirely in God.

"It is to this great act of resignation, so glorious to God and so useful to the soul, that the prayer of quiet leads, when it is well understood and rightly practiced. Of ourselves we cannot enter upon this way of prayer; of ourselves we cannot advance in it; but when God has raised us to it we must have the courage to follow it, and to persevere to the end."¹

It is in this kind of prayer that the mystic death and resurrection with Christ occur. This comes to a few choice souls after they have been led through trials and sufferings and have come to that state of complete abandonment in which the soul casts itself completely in the hands of

God to do and be done with as He wills. "All this is true; there is no delusion or Quietism in believing it, still less in experiencing it. This state is the height of perfection for the creature."¹

These are the contributions of Nicolas Grou as we are able to see them. Now, what is our estimate of him? To make an estimate of a man is rather difficult for one who has spent much time with his work over a period of several years. You are faced with the possibility of error in two directions. If you have been favorably impressed with the subject under study, you will have found things in him that others have not seen and in your feeling that others should know their value you are likely to over rate your subject. On the other hand, if you have been unfavorably impressed with the work you have investigated, you will be tempted almost unconsciously to under rate your subject.

What is the worst that we can say about Grou? In his own day, as has been shown, he was often charged with being a Quietist. However, he met the charge and showed rather clearly that his teaching was not Quietism at all but a very active and deeply spiritual way of prayer and devotion.

He was also charged with teaching men to waste their time in quietness and solitude, when they should be busy and actively engaged in a program of Christian charity. He

1. Manual for Interior Souls p. 401

met this by showing that the inner spiritual life is the very foundation of real charity, and that without this spiritual foundation charity becomes an empty shell without any spiritual value or meaning.

He was also charged with being an impractical dreamer and often scoffed at as a devout. He realized this and attributed it to the spiritual blindness of the average Christian, even the majority of Church leaders. We must confess, that while he sets a very high ideal of spiritual life, he presents it in a practical and logical order.

Like many other deep or extreme mystics, he was and still is charged with claiming too much. He answered this by claiming nothing and giving all the honor to the work of the Holy Spirit. He supports this with clear logic, the lives of the saints and his own experiences.

When we consider his writings themselves, the worst that we can say about them is that they are filled with many repetitions. The same thought or idea is presented over many times in his various books and often repeated numerous times in the same book. Some of his writing is very ambiguous, with long drawn out sentences the meaning of which is rather difficult to follow. We can say frankly that Grou, in spite of his wide scholarship, was not a literary genius.

On the other hand, we are impressed with the simple

directness of his approach in his writing. One is immediately filled with the feeling that the author is speaking from the authority of real personal knowledge and experience as he presents his subject.

Nicolas Grou, as we have said in the chapter on his works, will live as a spiritual writer. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries where the practical mystics were few, he was probably the most outstanding among the Catholics. With the new interest in mysticism that has come in this century there has been a republication of several of his books.

The one thing above all others that will keep his name alive is his exposition of the meaning and practice of prayer. This is basic in the teaching of the mystic way whether the reader be Catholic or Protestant.

Jean Nicolas Grou is not the greatest of the spiritual writers or the mystics, but it is our opinion that his name should and will live.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- J. Nicolas Grou: Morale tirée des Confessions de St. Augustine, Paris, 1786
- J. Nicolas Grou: Morality from St. Augustine, translated from the French by Alexander Clinton (MacKenzie), republished, London, 1934
- J. Nicolas Grou: Caractères de la vraie dévotion, Paris, 1788
- J. Nicolas Grou: The Characters of Real Devotion, a translation from the French by Alexander Clinton (MacKenzie), London, 1791
- J. Nicolas Grou: Caracteres de la Verdadera Devocion, a Spanish translation of the French, Madrid, 1796
- J. Nicolas Grou: Characteristics of True Devotion, translated from the French by Ellen M. Fogg, New York, 1883
- J. Nicolas Grou: The Characteristics of True Devotion, a revised translation from the French under the editorship of Samuel H. Frisbee, New York, 1895
- J. Nicolas Grou: Maximes Spirituelles avec des Explications, Paris, 1789
- J. Nicolas Grou: Spiritual Maxims, translated from the French under the editorship of J. M. Neale, London, 1874
- J. Nicolas Grou: La Science pratique du Crucifix dans l'usage des sacrements de Pénitence et d'Eucharistie, Paris, 1789

- J. Nicolas Grou: Manuel des Ames Intérieures, Recueil d'opuscules inédits du P. Grou de la Compagnie de Jesus (Edition complète), Paris, 1847
- J. Nicolas Grou: Manual for Interior Souls, translated from the French, London, 1889
- J. Nicolas Grou: The Hidden Life of the Soul, an English version of the first forty chapters of the Manuel des Ames Intérieures, republished under the editorship of Sidney M. Lear, London, 1927
- J. Nicolas Grou: Meditations en forme de Retraite sur l'Amour de Dieu avec un petit écrit sur le don soi-meme a Dieu, London, 1796
- J. Nicolas Grou: Meditations upon the Love of God, translated from the French by Teresa Fitzgerald, London, 1898
- J. Nicolas Grou: L'École de Jésus Christ, Paris, 1885
- J. Nicolas Grou: The School of Jesus, the first half of L'École de Jésus Christ translated from the French by Alexander Clinton (MacKenzie), Dublin 1801
- J. Nicolas Grou: The School of Jesus Christ, translated from the French by Mrs. Rodolph Stawell, London, 1932
- J. Nicolas Grou: L'Intérieur de Jésus et de Marie, Paris, 1815
- J. Nicolas Grou: The Interior of Jesus and Mary, translated from the French by Miss Kennelly, London, 1891
- J. Nicolas Grou: How to Pray, a translation of the part of L'École de Jésus Christ that deals with prayer by Teresa Fitzgerald, London, 1901

- J. Nicolas Grou: Maximes pour la Conduite de la Vie,
adressées a un jeune Anglais catholique, Paris, 1874
- J. Nicolas Grou: Le Chrétien sanctifié par l'Oraison
Dominicale, Paris, 1858
- J. Nicolas Grou: The Christian Sanctified by the Lord's
Prayer, translated from the French by Ellen M. Fogg,
New York, 1885
- J. Nicolas Grou: Retraite sur le don de soi-même à Dieu
- J. Nicolas Grou: Self-Consecration or (The Gift of One's
Self to God), translated from the French, New York, 1887
- J. Nicolas Grou: Retraite sur de que c'est qu'un Chrétien
- J. Nicolas Grou: Retraite sur la connaissance et l'amour
de Jésus Christ
- J. Nicolas Grou: Lettre à M --, conseiller au Parlement de
Paris, où on lui propose quelques doutes au sujet de
l'édit de banissement des Jésuites, porté par Henry IV
en 1595, & rapporté en entier à la page 4 de L'arrêt
du 6 août 1762. Paris, 1763
- J. Nicolas Grou: La Republique de Platon, Paris, 1762
- J. Nicolas Grou: Loix de Platon, Amsterdam, 1769
- J. Nicolas Grou: Dialogues de Platon, Amsterdam, 1770
- J. Nicolas Grou: Réponse au livre intitulé: "Extracts des
assertions dangereuses et pernicieuses en tout genre."
- J. Nicolas Grou: Letter to Mary Weld
- J. Nicolas Grou: Letter to Madame d'Adhemar, 1784

- J. Nicolas Grou: Manuscript addressed to Mary Weld
- A. A. Cadres: Notice sur la Vie et les Ouvrages du Pere
Jean Nicolas Grou, Paris, 1862
- Andrew C. Zenos: Compendium of Church History, Philadelphia,
 1928
- Roger Hudleston: Letter to the writer, 1935
- F. Doyette: Introduction, L'École de Jésus Christ, Paris, 1885
- Journal Historique et Litteraire, August, 1787
- Roger Hudleston: Introduction, Morality from St. Augustine
 London, 1934
- Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques, October, 1788
- J. M. Neale: Preface, Spiritual Maxims, London, 1874
- Roger Hudleston: Introduction, The School of Jesus Christ,
 London, 1932
- Sidney M. Lear: Preface, The Hidden Life of the Soul,
 London, 1927
- Frank M. Powell: Reasons for the Failure of the Jesuits, a
 lecture recorded in the writer's notes, 1930
- P. Rodriguez: On Christian Perfection
- St. Augustine of Hippo: Confessions
- St. Ignatius Loyola: Spiritual Exercises
- Thomas a Kempis: The Imitation of Christ
- Alban Goodier: The Jesuits, New York, 1930
- Somervögel and de Backer: Bibliothèque de Compagnie de Jésus
- P. Lejeune: An Introduction to the Mystical Life, London, 1912

Joseph A. Leighton: The Field of Philosophy, New York, 1924

William James: Varieties of Religious Experience, New
York, 1915

Coleman R. Griffith: General Introduction to Psychology,
New York, 1928

A. Poulain: The Graces of Interior Prayer, London, 1912

W. R. Inge: Christian Mysticism

George A. Coe: Psychology of Religion

Frederick von Hügel: The Mystical element in Religion

H. Brémond: Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment Religieux
en France

Winston's Encyclopedia, Philadelphia, 1933,

Article on Mysticism

Article on Jesuits

Article on France

Article on Asceticism

Encyclopedia Americana, article on Mysticism

James Hastings: Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, New
York, 1928, article on Mysticism

Encyclopedia Britannica, eleventh edition,

Article on Ignatius Loyola

Article on Mysticism

Article on Asceticism

Article on Jesuits

Article on France

Article on St. Augustine